



701-V288P

121946

Art Dept.

STACK

Van Dyke

Prin. of art

701  
V288P

BASEMENT  
QA STOR.

121-946

## Seattle Public Library

Please keep your card in this pocket. The borrower's card must be presented whenever a book or periodical is taken out, renewed or returned.



SEATTLE PUBLIC LIBRARY

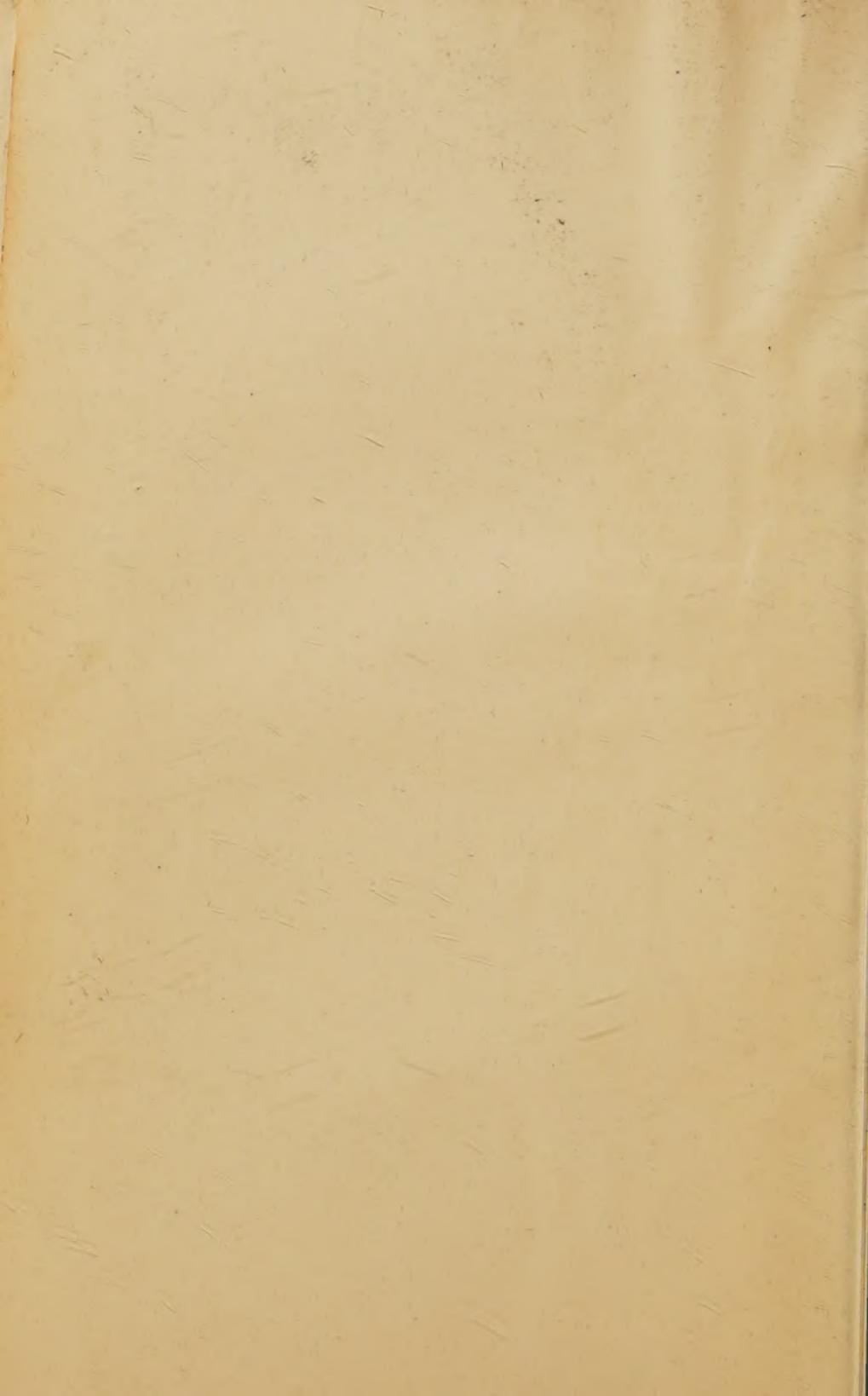


0010016393679

Due on the latest date stamped below  
Form 2 See "Folder of Information"

**DISCARDED**  
PROPERTY OF THE STATE

**DISCARDED**  
THIS IS NO LONGER PROPERTY OF THE SEATTLE PUBLIC LIBRARY



# PRINCIPLES OF ART:

R.

PART I. ART IN HISTORY;

PART II. ART IN THEORY.

BY

JOHN C. VAN DYKE,

LIBRARIAN OF THE SAGE LIBRARY, NEW BRUNSWICK, N. J.

PROPERTY OF  
Seattle Public Library

NEW YORK:  
FORDS, HOWARD, & HULBERT.

1887.

*Chas*

COPYRIGHT, IN 1887,

By JOHN C. VAN DYKE.

*AR*

SEP 1 1914

701  
Van Dyke

Art Dept.

121946

P-171

## PREFACE.

---

THE sending forth of this volume to the public requires but few words of preface. The subject of it is not a new one. The leading principles of art have been too long known and too well established to admit of much discovery ; and if herein I have surveyed these principles from a novel point of view and treated them in a comprehensible manner I shall have accomplished all that I intended.

The treatment has been a matter of special care with me, as I wished the book to be of a popular nature and appeal to intelligent readers generally. For this purpose I have endeavored throughout these pages to be clear and concise in statement, to be accurate as regards events of history and their effect upon art, and to be intelligible by the choice of the simplest language. The scientific has been avoided ; I have not thought to write the hieratic for a small metaphysical priesthood, but rather the plain language of the people for all who are in any way interested in art.

The first part of the book has been devoted to illustrating the causes, the development, and the character of art, reasoning always from the nature of a barbarism or a civilization to the art which is the re-

sult of it. I have endeavored to trace through antiquity and history the mental evolution of man from the savage to the civilized being, and to point out the concurrent changes in his art, marking his progress. From this the reasoning has been that, if the earliest art was only rude decoration, and imitative drawings upon bone, wood, and slate, it but comported with the savage state of life from which it sprung ; and if that of to-day is expressive of ideas, feelings, and emotions, it again but indicates the high civilization producing it. The conclusion of the first part of the book is carried out in the second part, wherein, theoretically, I have striven to show the aim and purpose of painting as it is to-day—the ideas, sentiments, and subjects that it now represents, and the characteristic style of modern expression,—including that strong element in Nineteenth Century art, the individuality of the artist.

To attempt the forestalling of criticism by explanation or apology is quite useless. I have simply set forth some thoughts about art, which seem to me worth consideration, in this day of so-called "realism." These thoughts, based upon historic and contemporary facts, have taken the form of an argument, the successive steps of which I have sought to sustain by citations from recognized authorities in the philosophy of history, literature and art. Whether my ideas find acceptance or not, if the book interests those who care to think about such matters I shall be well content.

J. C. V. D.

# CONTENTS.

---

	PAGE
PREFACE.....	iii

## PART I.

### *ART IN HISTORY.*

INTRODUCTION.....	ii
-------------------	----

CHAPTER I. ART IMITATIVE, DECORATIVE, AND SYMBOLIC..	18
--	----

PRIMITIVE ART.—The Origin of Man not discussed; The Primitive Man of Geology taken merely as an Illustration; His Conditions of Life, and their Effect upon Him—The Stone Age: The Life and Art of Man under it—The Reindeer Period, and Epoch of Polished Stone: Increased Intelligence; Conception of Deity—The Age of Bronze—The Lake Dwellers: Further Advance reflected in Art—The Age of Iron: The Rise from the Savage to the Barbarian; Tribal Life; Building of Cities; Approach to Civilization—Art again Reflective, but its aim only Decoration or Imitation.

EGYPTIAN ART.—Favorable Conditions of Climate and Soil in Egypt; Valley of the Nile; Earliest Egyptians; Their Rapid Progress; Its Cause—Founding of a Monarchy; Pursuits of Life; Advance of the Nation; The Pharaoh Monarch Supreme; War and its Consequences to Egypt—The Religion of the Egyptians; Worship of the Elements; Death and Future Life; Symbol-writings; Their Elaboration and Illustration by Painter and Sculptor; The First Art Sepulchral; Its Nature and Aim—Egyptian Literature; Methods of Writing; How Perpetuated—Poetry of Pentaour the Scribe; A Statement of Facts in Rhythymical Language—Architecture; Its Simplicity; An Imitation of Natural Forms; Its Advance—Art Devoted to Religion and the King—Character of Egyptian Painting and Sculpture; The Latter bordering on Symbolism; Subjects and Materials Used; Correspondence of the Art with the Egyptian Civilization—The Arts of Chaldaea, Assyria, India, Phœnicia, and Cyprus of a Nature similar to that of Egypt—Art, Imitative, Decorative, and Symbolic, seen in all the Beginnings of Civilization.

## CHAPTER II. ART CLASSICAL AND SYMMETRICAL.....

Art a Reflection of the Nature of a Civilization rather than its Extent; Dependent on the Sympathies of the People; Instances given.

GREEK ART.—The Geography of Greece; Topography, Climate, and Soil; Natural Beauty of Greece and the Greeks—Origin of the First Settlers left in obscurity; The Inquiry begun at the Point of Progress to which Egypt was traced—*First Period*: State of Greece prior to 580 B.C.; Government, People, National Character, Pursuits, War, Religion, Philosophy, Literature, Poetry, Music—Greek Architecture, its Origin; Heavy Nature of the Doric; Sculpture Archaic and Stiff; Materials; Ornamentation; Painting a Part of Decoration—*Second Period* (down to 400 B.C.): Greek History, Wars and Political Changes; Growth of the Greek Character; Development of the Physical Man; The National Games; Education—Rise of Philosophy, Law, Literature, the Drama, Poetry, and Music—The Building of Cities; Architecture Lighter and more Graceful; The Ionic introduced—All Branches of Knowledge advance, but the Greek Character better shown in Sculpture than in anything else; The Advance on the Archaic Figure; New Materials; The Sculptors—The Greek Ideal explained; The Ideal realized by Phidias—The Periclean Age of Splendor—*Third Period* (400–323 B.C.): Changes in the State; Changes in the Greek Character affecting Literature and Art; Growing Indifference to the Gods; Selfishness, Luxury, Vice—The New Ideal, the New Philosophy. Poetry, Music, and Play—Ionian and Corinthian Architecture; Painting—Changes shown in Sculpture; Different Subjects, Ideas, and Treatment; Art followed the Games and became purely human—Scopas, Praxiteles, and other Sculptors—*The Hellenistic Age* (323–133 B.C.): Decline of the Greek Power Politically, Socially, Ethically, Religiously, Artistically—Advance of Science; Decline of Philosophy and the Ideal—Sculpture and Architecture the most Enduring of the Arts; Art at Pergamus; The Ending of Greek Art on Roman Soil—The only Indigenous Classical Art sprung up and died in Greece; Its Imitation in the Time of the Renaissance and in the Eighteenth Century.

	PAGE
<b>CHAPTER III. ART EMOTIONAL, INTELLECTUAL, AND INDIVIDUAL . . . . .</b>	<b>75</b>
EARLY CHRISTIAN, MEDIÆVAL, AND GOTHIC ART.—Modification of Climatic Influences upon Established Nations—Painting chosen as the Representative Art of Christian Civilization—Rome and its Place in Art-history; Rise of Christianity; The New View of Life directly opposed to the Old Paganisms; The Mind and Soul opposed to the Body; The Latter Abused, Starved, and Scourged; The New Life; Outgrowth of Excessive Emotion was Hysteria and Fanaticism; Endurance of Persecution by the Early Christians; The Church and the People; Dogmatism, Ignorance, Misery, Poverty—Education denounced by the Clergy; Five Centuries of Darkness—Early Christian Art but a Preparation for the Future—The Romanesque and Gothic Periods (1000–1400 A.D.); History of the Times and the People; Intensified Emotion—The Crusades, Mariolatry, Chivalry; Growth of Intelligence, Commerce, and Trade; Education advanced in Many Departments; A Small Classic Revival; Universities established; Philosophical Thought; Scholasticism—Rise of Literature; Italian Poetry—Romanesque and Gothic Architecture, Sculpture, and Painting.	
<b>CHAPTER IV. ART EMOTIONAL, INTELLECTUAL, AND INDIVIDUAL (<i>Continued</i>) . . . . .</b>	<b>97</b>
THE RENAISSANCE.—History of the Times and the People; Nature of the Age—Causes of the Renaissance—Advance of Knowledge, Discovery, Science, Invention; Restoration of the Antique—Humanism of the Renaissance divided into Four Periods; The Periods followed separately; The Result Great Acquisition, but in Literature little Production; Its Effect as an Educator; Its Abrupt Cessation—The Poetry of the Period shown to reflect the Age—The Renaissance Architecture—The Sculpture and its Nature—Painting; Its Causes and Impulses; Effect of Classicism, the Study of Nature, and Christianity, working together; Conditions favorable to the Existence of Painting—Painters of the Renaissance: Masaccio, Fra Filippo, Botticelli, Filippino, Ghirlandajo, Signorelli, Squarcione, Mantegna, John Bellini, Perugino, Pinturicchio, Francia, Fra Bartolommeo, Andrea del Sarto, Correggio—The Art of the Renaissance summed up in the Works of Leonardo, Raphael,	

and Michael Angelo—The Venetian School a Brilliant Epilogue to the Renaissance.	
<b>CHAPTER V. ART EMOTIONAL, INTELLECTUAL, AND INDIVIDUAL (<i>Concluded</i>).....</b>	<b>131</b>

MODERN ART.—Summary of the Causes of the Renaissance Decline; Decline of the Church, Falling off of Sympathy, Loss of Liberty, Advance of Science, Scattering of Knowledge, etc.—Art immediately following the Renaissance—The Dormant Period succeeding—Modern Civilization beginning in the Last Half of the Eighteenth Century; France to be used for Illustration—Spirit of the Age; History of the Times and the People; Political Movements; Assertion of the Individual—French History prior to the Revolution—England and Germany—Advance of Science—Rise of Philosophy—German and French Literature exemplifying the Age; The Revolt against Convention; Romanticism in the Drama, in Poetry, in the Novel—Summary of French Literature—Architecture; Classical Revivals and the Revolt against them—Sculpture and Painting similarly affected—French Painting of the Present Century; David, Gros, Ingres, Horace Vernet, Delaroche, Géricault, Ary Scheffer, Delacroix, Decamps, Fromentin, Corot, Rousseau, Daubigny, Troyon, Courbet, Millet, Bréton, Frère, Gérôme, Cabanel, Bouguereau, Meissonnier, Vollon, Bonnat, Carolus Duran.

## PART II. ART IN THEORY.

<b>CHAPTER I. ART AND ITS AIM.....</b>	<b>173</b>
Impossibility of formulating a Theory or of giving a Definition that shall explain all Art upon One Basis—Art is what its Civilization makes it—A Theory of Modern Art alone considered herein—What Art is <i>not</i> —1. <i>An Imitation of Nature</i> ; A Popular Fallacy; How established; Not so much believed in by the Artists as by the Critics; Applied more to Painting than to the other Arts classed as Imitative Arts; Art but a Point of View, and Genius but a Way of Looking at Things—2. <i>Truth to Nature</i> ; A False Aim; Varies from Imitation; Truth the Aim of Science, not of Art; The Two confused by Writers; Truth only a Means of Accomplishment, not an End—3. <i>Truth in Morality</i> ; Objected	

to on Same Ground as Truth to Nature; A Morality of Art, Yes; An Art of Morality, No—4. *Expression of the Ideal*; Thrown out of Consideration in Discussion of Modern Painting; The Meaning of the Word distorted; People speak of an Artist's "Ideal" when they mean his "Idea;" No Universal Abstract Conception, but on the contrary Individual Conceptions—5. *Expression of Technical Skill*; An Aim of many Artists; A Most Important Factor in Production, but only a Factor and not the Principal—What Art is: *Expression of Beauty*; Nature and Existence of Beauty as an Attribute of it; The Emotions; The Beautiful not to be confounded with the Agreeable—*Material or External Beauty* may be an Aim of Art—*Beauty of Thought* the Highest Beauty and Loftiest Aim of Painting.

CHAPTER II. OF PICTORIAL IDEAS..... 213

Painting a Symbolic Language; Kinds of Ideas; Ästhetic Ideas; How conveyed—The Divisions and Limitations of the Arts; Literary Painting; Painting capable of conveying Pictorial Ideas only—Degrees of Beauty in Ideas; The Highest Beauty; The Sublime described and exemplified; The Sublime often beyond Comprehension; Failure of Art to express it; Shown in High Mountains, Niagara, the Ocean—Analogy between Poetry and Painting; Sublimity, how expressed in Both Arts—The Sun and Clouds, how interpreted by Poets and Painters—Beauty of Light, Clouds, Storm, Darkness, Valleys, Lakes, Rivers—Sublime in Human Action; Religion a Loftiy Theme of Painting—The Moral-sublime and the Sublime in History—The Sublime in Physical Power and Human Passion—Ideas of Lesser Grandeur; The Harmonious and Simply Beautiful in Art—Ideas unconsciously conceived and vaguely expressed; Poetic Feeling and Sentiment; Artistic Feeling; Simple Beauty of Form.

CHAPTER III. OF PICTORIAL SUBJECT..... 243

The Constituent Elements of a Painting are Idea, Subject, and Expression; Subject perhaps the Least Important; A Clog to Men of Genius and an Advantage to the Unthinking; Its Choice, however, a Matter of Much Weight—The Artist-belief that it makes No Difference what you paint if you but paint it well—External Beauty as a Subject—An Idea like a Gem requires a Setting appropriate to it; Analogy of the Other Arts; Choice of Loftiy Subject in great Paintings, Poems, Dramas,

Operas—Subjects of the Present Time and the Artist's Own Country not necessary; Nationality not displayed in Subject chosen, but in Ideas and Manner of Expression—Contemporary Subjects too Crude and New; Time required to give Perspective and mold Facts for Poetry and Painting; Hawthorne quoted; Subjects chosen by the Masters.

CHAPTER IV. OF PICTORIAL EXPRESSION ..... 256

Practical Side of Art not dealt with—The Principle of Concentrated Force only; Its Absolute Necessity in all Art; Instanced in the Novel, the Drama, the Stage Representation of the Drama, and in Poetry—It requires the Suppression of Unimportant Material, the Suggestion, only, of Minor Details, and the Full Expression of the Leading Features; Its Application to Art—But One Idea can be expressed in a Picture—Means of Expression: Form and Color—Color-values; Light and Shade; Positions according to Value; Harmony, Gradation, and Tone—Form- or Object-values; Selection, Arrangement, Grouping, Composition—The Law of Concentration again; Used by the Masters; Instanced in their Works; Instanced in Modern Art and in American Art—Suppression and Suggestion of Details; Of Positive Exaggeration and Distortion of Natural Forms; Has been done by the Masters, but not to be Justified—Exaggeration should be Apparent only and not Real.

CHAPTER V. OF THE ARTIST'S INDIVIDUALITY ..... 278

The Masses of Mankind Impersonal; History made by Individuals called Geniuses; Nationality shown in Schools of Art; Difference of View—Difference between Eccentricity and Individuality; The Latter displayed not in Power alone, but in Thought and Feeling; Shown in Different Conceptions of the Same Thing; Shown in All Branches of Knowledge; Ideas please because of their Individualism—Seen in Subjects chosen for Literature and Painting—Shown best of all in Manner of Treatment; Same Thought differently expressed—Recognition of Paintings by their Peculiar Appearance; Points of View—A Picture an Artist's Autobiography; Impossibility of Eliminating the Artist—Subjective Treatment out of Keeping with the Spirit of the Age and False to Art; Realism—Great Art an Expression of Personal Feeling, and valuable for the Thought or Feeling and not for its Mechanical Expression.

# PRINCIPLES OF ART.

---

## PART I.

### ART IN HISTORY.

---

#### INTRODUCTION.

THE skilled archæologist who collects antiquities of art from some recent excavation has little trouble in correctly classifying and assigning them to certain nations, ages, schools, and even artists, of the past.

How does he do this, and why does he not often assign Assyrian sculpture, for instance, to Egypt, and Egyptian sculpture to Greece, or fall into some kindred error? How can he determine that this marble belongs to the Attic school, and that one to the school of Pergamus? How can he say that one statue is the work of Phidias, and another that of Scopas or Praxiteles? There must be some law of guidance in his assignments, for each piece falls into its proper place like the parts of a mosaic; each marble is a page of history completing the mutilated text; each statue a connecting link in the historic chain. By what rule of logic does he arrive at such accurate conclusions?

By no new one, surely. In fact, his reasoning is

so generally known and unconsciously used as to be scarcely worth our pointing out. He reasons that certain nations in certain stages of civilization produce a certain quality of art. How does he know this? Precisely as he knows that figs do not grow on thistles. Like may only produce like. A low state of savagery or barbarism will give forth only a savage or a barbaric art. A high state of civilization will produce a civilized and a high art. The archæologist reasons from effect to cause. An Osiride figure of colossal proportions, helmeted, cross-armed with scepter and flagellum, and seated, austere and passionless, upon a throne of stone, must have been produced in the days of the Pharaohs. The life of Egypt in Pharaonic days warrants the inference. The workmanship of the statue, its attempt at imitation or its symbolism, its conventional type, confirm the conclusion and help to point its date. Again, certain marbles may be known to have belonged to the Periclean Age of Greece, not because they were taken from the Parthenon, but by their peculiar modeling, their display of the perfect physical man naked and athletic, their symmetry and grace, their classic form and monumental repose. No other land could possibly have produced them, and Greece could have done so only during a certain period of its civilization which we know as the Age of Pericles. In this time a certain sculptor is known to have lived whose individual methods of treatment are shown in these marbles, and again the reasoning is that Phidias must have produced them.

From this, before going farther, we may state one

principle of art, and leave to the following pages its conclusive proof. *Art reflects the civilization in which it is produced.* It is chameleon-like, and takes the coloring of its surroundings; it is mirror-like, and likens the age out of which it springs; it is biographical, and speaks the life of the artist and, necessarily, the characteristics of his race. Nothing can record so truly the nature of a people or a country's civilization as its art, for "the acts of a nation may be triumphant by its good fortune; and its words, mighty by the genius of a few of its children; but its art only by the general gifts and common sympathies of the race."\* Whatsoever a nation has endured, attained to, and accomplished will find its expression and its history in the epochs of its art. The artist lives in his own time and seldom ahead of or behind it. If he is striving toward the unattainable of the future, there is some impulse of his age that urges him on. If he goes back to imitate an art of the past, again some tendency of his time promotes it. Whichever way he turns, and whatever he may do, the circumstances of his surroundings rule him unconsciously; and if he ever promotes or seems to originate the circumstances, it is only after he is famed and commands influence. Apparently the geniuses of the past have been men out of their proper orbits, living in advance of their ages; but were they so in reality? Was there not a reason for their existence, and behind them a motive springing from contemporaneous sources which impelled them on-

---

\* Ruskin, *St. Mark's Rest.*

ward? It is easy to trace each lightning-flash home to its native cloud, and the light of genius, though more brilliant than others, reflects none the less truly its place of origin.

If, then, our first principle that art is a reflex of the age producing it be true (and we shall endeavor to prove this as we proceed), we are in a position to examine art in its development. Such an examination necessarily brings in the history of nations, for the reasoning is from that which is produced to the civilization producing, or *vice versa*. Now if we take a bird's-eye view of all history, we shall be able to generalize a second principle, viz., that man in history has been and is progressive; that the tendency is onward and upward; that necessarily art is likewise progressive because reflective; and that from the art of the Early Man of geology to that of the Periclean Greek, and from the latter to the art of the European of to-day, there are successive stages of progression. This second principle must be modified and received with caution; for while we are theorizing and trying to be consistent, it must be looked to that we do not distort history to suit our special case. There has been a *general* progression of mankind, a development from the little better than brute of antiquity to the intelligent being of to-day; but this advance has not always been either regular or chronological. There have been breaks in the line, whereby certain nations have gone far ahead, and then there have been lapses for hundreds of years, when civilization seemed to retrograde. For instance, what shall we say of

Greece? It sprang from barbarism, and in comparatively few centuries attained a culture which perhaps only our self-satisfaction in the nineteenth century leads us to think was not so great as is our own. An unprejudiced comparison of Greek life with that of to-day could only result in the conclusion that we differ from, but have not, in many respects, excelled, the Greeks. Our philosophy, literature, law, and art correspond to our present wants; but it is impossible to say that they are better than were those of Greece, and it may well be doubted if they are as good. We must recognize, then, at the start that civilization has not made a uniform progression; yet it has nevertheless advanced, and that advance may be attributed to certain causes. The order of its movement is like that of the waves on the seashore. Action and reaction is the law that governs it. The wave of Greek civilization was mighty in its height and power, and its recession was correspondingly great. When it failed, for nearly fifteen hundred years there was naught but barren beach. Then followed the Renaissance, rising and falling like its predecessor; and now once more a mighty wave is forming upon which we of to-day are borne along. From its size, its constituent elements, and its tendency, may we not gather an idea of its future greatness, and venture the prediction that it will be higher, nobler, and better than any that has gone before?

It is an easy task to establish a philosophy of art in any one country taken independently of other countries; but to found a universal philosophy by link-

ing together different periods of culture in a chronologically progressive series is almost impossible. The civilizations of the different nations have not always extended their influence into the nations succeeding them. Exceptions abound, of such startling force and magnitude that the whole continuity is broken. Yet this much we know, that the Primitive Man of geology, in Europe, was little superior, intellectually, to the animals about him ; that man in Europe to-day is an enlightened being characterized by mental strength. A civilizing process extending over centuries has produced a change in him, and the transition has been from physical to intellectual excellence. The intermediate periods with their civilizations must record the stages of the progress, and though this progress like a mountain stream sometimes runs rapidly over shallows, or sleeps for years in deep pools of silence, or, again, perhaps disappears from view entirely, only to emerge again farther on with new brilliancy, yet within it all there is a tendency onward. The old order has changed continuously, the development has been irregular ; yet if we go back and trace the changes that have taken place, we shall find their record has been faithfully kept in the book of art. It is the autobiography of man, and in it may be read his history. From this history we shall attempt to generalize three stages of progression in art.\* (1) The Imitative, Decorative, and Symbolic stage, wherein

---

\* Hegel divides art-history into three stages, called the Symbolic, the Classic, and the Romantic.

the form is predominant. We shall find its illustration in the art of savage Europe, in Egypt, Assyria, Chaldæa and Phœnicia, and in the early art of Greece. (2) The Classical and Symmetrical stage, wherein form and thought are harmoniously blended. This may be best illustrated by the art of Greece during the Age of Pericles. (3) The Emotional, Intellectual, and Individual stage, wherein the emotion, idea, or individualism of the artist predominates, and the form is subordinate. Its illustration is the early Christian and Mediæval art; the nobler pieces of the High Renaissance; much of the early part of the art-work in the nineteenth century known as Romantic art; and much of contemporary times. We shall briefly examine these stages separately; not for the purpose of detailing a history, but merely by way of illustrating the epochs of art progress and the principles underlying them.

## CHAPTER I.

### ART IMITATIVE, DECORATIVE, AND SYMBOLIC.

PRIMITIVE ART.—It is not necessary that we should discuss the origin of man. Whether he descended or ascended, or both, is of no consequence herein. We have only to deal with stages of art-progress, beginning with the lowest stage we can find. This is with the being known to science as Primitive Man ; but in using that term it is not necessary that we should say with ethnologists that he was the *first* man, or that his periods of development, such as the Stone, Bronze, and Iron Ages, were sequential in progression. History and the teachings of religion contradict the first idea ; and the existence of savage tribes to-day side by side with civilized nations argues the possible contemporaneous existence of the earlier periods. Yet it is well established that this so-called Primitive Man lived ; and possibly there was a time, before the record begins, when he was only a superior animal : but we have not the data of such a period, and its existence can only be conjectured, for the history of antiquity begins with the expression of abstract thought. This is the division-line between the human and the brute. The latter lives and dies to-day the same as centuries ago, making no sign and leaving no record because devoid of intel-

ligence. Man survives oblivion through his thought perpetuated by his descendants. The primitive conceit that led the savage to strike two flints together and edge their sides for spear-heads made possible the sculpture of the Parthenon.\* The instance of a child, whose chief care is for facts, as compared with the educated man, whose bent is toward ideas, will illustrate the difference between this Primitive Man and the Periclean Greek. It is merely one of development; and this illustration of the child should be borne in mind, for tribes and nations grow from infancy to manhood in an analogous manner. Again, the conditions of life affect them alike, and we shall presently see that as the man of to-day is molded intellectually by the civilization in which he lives and cannot elect to be other than his age may make him, so the man of the Stone Age was bounded by the savagery of *his* surroundings and could not choose but be a savage.

The social and intellectual influences bearing upon nations, as M. Taine has well set forth,† determine the product of their thought. History has verified this in the past, and is confirming it in the present. The difference in the intellectual results of existing nations and savage tribes of to-day is directly attributable to difference of circumstances; and if we look back at the man of the Stone Age in Northern Europe, we shall find him in the lowest stage of human existence known to history, while his brother on the banks

---

\* Boucher de Perthes.

† *Philosophy of Art.*

of the Nile, under more favorable conditions, had builded an empire and founded a dynasty. Life may have begun alike in each case, but developed quickly or was retarded, accomplished much or accomplished little, according as the circumstances surrounding were favorable or otherwise. With Primitive Man they were most adverse. The first records of him are found in France, Germany, and northward on the shores of the Baltic. In that then inclement country, swept by storms, floods, and glaciers, amid trials and dangers innumerable, he lived in the forest and on the sea-shore, fighting for existence not only against the elements, but against the mammoth, the wolf, and the great cave-bear. Like an animal he sought protection from the cold and the attacks of his enemies in the hollows of trees and mounds and in the depths of natural caves whence have been exhumed the records of his life. The earliest mark of his intelligence, his self-consciousness, is found in the invention of stone weapons which assured him success in the chase. At this time it is supposed that he lived upon raw flesh and what fruits of the earth he could gather; and his clothing was the skins of the animals he had slain.

Some improvements came into his manner of life after the discovery of fire, which is attributed to this age. He invented the bow and arrow, and the hatchet and knife of flint. He burned out the hollows of trees to make canoes, and began navigation. And at this early stage his first attempts at art make themselves manifest in his necklaces of shells and teeth, in his hatchings and carvings upon the handles of his

weapons, and in the markings and diagonal lines upon rudely-made pottery. Whence and how came his fancy for ornament cannot be explained, except by saying that it was as instinctive to him as it is for a child upon the seashore to build mounds of sand and stud them with pretty shells. Such art is purely decorative in its nature, and is indicative of a low order of human intelligence, such as is to-day noticeable in the savage tribes of the earth. But in this period occurs another style of art worthy of more serious notice, since it reveals a thought and a desire to transmit that thought to others. This is the rude attempt to carve upon bone and to outline upon stone and slate the figures of animals. The outline-drawing of the cave-bear upon a stone found in the Cave of Massat may be said to mark the beginning of the graphic arts. Here is a man who has something to say to his fellows. He wishes perhaps to describe some animal he has seen or killed in the chase. Words will not adequately serve him, even if he had much command of them, so he resorts to *imitating* the likeness of the animal upon a flat stone. He conveys an idea of nature to his fellows, but he himself has none but that of imitation. This should be remembered here, for farther on we shall see that this idea of imitation marks, again, a low order of intellect, and is apparent in the first actions of children, and even in animals and birds; and that between it and an idea of passion or of power which characterizes the genius of educated man there is a vast difference.

The various periods in the life of Primitive Man

correspond to steps of progress toward civilization, which we shall follow, discarding the question of their succeeding each other in order of time. In the Reindeer Period he is found a mighty hunter. The flesh of the deer furnished food; the skin, clothing; the bones supplied arrows, needles, spoons, handles; and the horns were made into daggers. In the Epoch of Polished Stone his weapons are found to be better constructed and more numerous. He is still a dweller in caves; but he has banded together with others of his kind for protection, and society is formed. The friction of mind upon mind strikes out the spark of thought. Association becomes the promoter of intelligence. Rude agriculture is begun, and the now advanced man invents mills of flat stones to grind grain, tames animals, becomes an expert hunter, travels from place to place by beaten forest roads, navigates the rivers, and builds intrenched forts of stone for protection from unfriendly tribes. His pottery is now better made and more floridly decorated, his weapons are marked with the lines and forms of the animals he has slain, his arms are clasped with bracelets of ivory and jet, and around his neck hang strings of amber beads.

Another feature showing a greater power of abstract thought appears at this time. The savage has conceived of a Deity and a future life. Whether his religion was inherited from the remotest ages or sprang from natural sources cannot be known; but likely enough it was a mingling of both. The inexplicable operations of nature, combined with tradition, may have taught him the existence of an Unseen

Ruler ; and gratitude for the bounties of the earth, together with fear of the elements, may have been the cause of his worship. However this may be, or whatever the cause or form, it is quite certain that a religion existed, and in it Primitive Man incorporated the belief that the Power which could create and control his life here could re-create or continue it in a hereafter. Hence, in that early age when the warrior died they buried him with his weapons of the chase, and erected over his body, as a protection, the tumulus of stone of which the pyramids of Egypt and the sarcophagi of Greece were but enlargements and developments.

During the Age of Bronze metals were discovered, and copper and tin fused together were used in molding swords, spears, hatchets, rings, pins, bracelets, and many articles of domestic and agricultural use. The highest point of advancement during this period was reached in Switzerland, where, hemmed in by the mountains and confined to the valleys, men banded together in villages of huts built out into the lakes upon upright piles. The influence of society as an educator is again instanced here. The lacustrine existence was most favorable to the interchange of ideas and the unity of forces. In consequence development now took place with some rapidity; and art progressed proportionately with the increased intelligence. Decoration became conspicuous ; and every implement of warfare was hatched and carved with quaint designs, while the drawings of animals and even men, upon wood and stone, became more common and accurate in their delineations of nature.

And now we come to the Age of Iron, when the periods of savagery seem to have been superseded by epochs of barbarism—using that word to signify a state of life half-way between savagery and civilization. The barbarian is now the chief of a wild horde riding forth to battle at the head of his fellows. Upon his head is an iron helmet, in his hand an iron spear, and at his side an ornamented sword. Bracelets and rings, and collars with many pendants, are about him. Trappings and housings are upon the horse; within his mouth is an iron bit; and upon his hoofs are iron shoes. Man has now subjugated surrounding nature, and to a certain extent made the circumstances subservient to his will. He has established law, government, society, agriculture, trade. He has founded a tribal monarchy, brought about the despotism of superior power, and reared buildings of stone and wood until they have formed cities. His art has extended itself in many forms; and his draughtsmanship, still rude and uncouth, has lent itself to the imitating of many things heretofore unattempted. And here, on the division-line between the civilized and the uncivilized, we may leave him. Our next illustration is that of Egypt, where for the work of the scientist we shall be able to substitute, in part, that of the historian.

The art of Primitive Man, at its best, shows nothing but a taste for decoration or an instinct toward imitation. It does not deal with ideas or thoughts of any power or importance, because incapable of doing so. A child accepts facts and accommodates itself to

them without thinking or reasoning ; it is imitative, not creative ; and possessed of a love for display, without the power of discriminative taste. Primitive Man was of an analogous nature, and his art was in correspondence therewith. Yet this class of art is not confined to the European savage and his different Ages ; but appears in the infancy of every tribe or race while they are struggling up toward civilization. It appeared in the early days of Egypt, Assyria, Phœnicia, and Greece ; and, again, in the aboriginal days of Mexico and Peru. It is apparent to-day in the bead and shell decorations and the picture-writings of the American Indians, and in the products of other savage tribes of the earth. It is the very beginning of art, revealing only the bare facts with which man in the savage and barbaric states alone deals.

EGYPTIAN ART.—In the preceding pages attention has been called to the progress toward civilization following immediately upon the association of man with his fellows. The earliest records of history are verifications of the truism that in the union of men there is mental and political strength ; and in those early days when the conditions of the country and climate were favorable to human existence, and the disposition of the land threw men together in certain valleys or sections of inclosed ground, the advance was more rapid than elsewhere through a concentration of forces. This was noticeable in Switzerland, where the snow-clad mountains drove the Lake Dwellers

into the valleys ; and now we are to glance hastily at a geographical conformation even more favorable, where man the barbarian soon developed into a civilized being.

The Nile and its valley have undergone no material change in their physical conditions during the past five thousand years. The narrow strips of fertile land lying on each side of the river, and extending from the Mediterranean to the island of Philæ, a distance of about seven hundred miles, constituted ancient, as they now constitute modern, Egypt. The Arabian and Libyan mountains bounded the river on each side, from its delta throughout the length of the land, making for the valley natural walls of protection against the inroads of barbarous tribes, and against the heat, the sands, and the siroccos of the surrounding deserts. The mountains were as the walls to a castle ; and the deserts were as the moat, for the wastes were well-nigh impassable for invaders. The land was one of eternal sunshine. The climate was dry, healthful and warm, even hot ; so that its early inhabitants had need of no protection against cold and rain. And in the valley, the Nile, which inundated and irrigated the whole basin from mountain to mountain each year, rendered vegetation luxurious to an extreme degree. Here was a country so situated and favored by nature as to be peculiarly well fitted for the habitation of man ; and here the earliest Egyptians lived. From the mud of the river they built themselves rude huts, and in the wind-worn caves of the mountains they found homes. Natural

instinct, combined with necessity, required them to utilize the provisions of nature placed before them. They became a pastoral, an agricultural, a trading people; and in the early days, when they can be but uncertainly traced, they appear to have been little better than the Primitive Man of Europe. So the transition from the barbarian of the Iron Age to the barbaric Egyptian is slight indeed. The advance of the latter from savagery to barbarism may be considered similar to that of the former; so we need not follow it too closely. Religion, law, government, inventions, arts, sprang from kindred sources; but the secret of the more rapid advance of the ancient Egyptians lay in the superior conditions of the land and the climate, and in the fact that their numbers were concentrated by the narrowness of the valley in which they lived. A civilization arose from barbarism almost at once; and when the richness of the land of Egypt became noised abroad to the savage tribes of Asia, Ethiopia, and Libya, and these latter sought to make incursions into the valley of the Nile, they found the Egyptians an armed force ready to resist them, with a leader, a Pharaoh, at their head. Up and down the land men multiplied and grew in strength, intelligence, and wealth. A spirit of trade sprung up. The river was navigated for purposes of commerce, and the deserts traversed on war-steeds in raids upon hostile bands. Animals of all kinds were tamed, and the Egyptians grew expert in stock-growing, agriculture, hunting, fishing, warfare. The number of inventions increased rapidly; the earlier sciences became estab-

lished; the making and molding of pottery, glass, and metals were understood; and the architecture of their long, low buildings of stone, constructed upon the principle of a cave and intended only for shelter from the heat or the deification of some god or king, is the wonder of to-day.

The Egyptian empire continued to advance in power up to the incoming of the Shepherd Kings, after which, for five hundred years, there was a lapse of which as yet little is known. But after the expulsion of the Hyksos and the restoration of the native Egyptian kings, the country once more flourished. Dynasties of leaders, called Pharaohs, succeeded one another by right of birth. Each Pharaoh assembled around him the warriors, the statesmen, the scribes, and the priests of his dominions. He made the laws, judged the people, declared war, and was monarch supreme. His immediate officers fawned upon him, the scribes wrote his praises, and the priests, to flatter him, declared to the people that he was descended from the sun-god Ra and was the beloved of Amun. The people believed in his divinity and worshiped him. By successions of augmenting power, soon the entire government passed into his hands and those of his officers. The common people became as slaves, willing to obey the wave of his hand, the nod of his head, or the glance of his eye. He marshaled them into battle array like automatons to do his bidding, and led them against invading hosts in mighty phalanxes of infantry. An unlimited monarchy prevailed, and Egypt was the Pharaoh.

Yet under this despotism civilization progressed.

War became a leading feature of life, pursued on a grand scale. In the Nineteenth Theban Dynasty Rameses the Great went forth to battle in a brazen chariot drawn by war-steeds caparisoned with shining harness, war-plumes in their heads, and trapped with turquois and amber beads. The king himself, beside his charioteer, rode in the center of a vast square of men, with a brazen helmet on his head, a gorget of gold on his breast, bracelets of golden asps upon his arms and wrists, and at his side war-lions and the sword, spear, bow and arrows of warfare. First in the vanguard marched a thousand musicians playing upon onager-skin drums, brass sistra, and short brass trumpets. Following came thousands of war-chariots, then cavalry, and in the rear a hundred thousand infantry moving like an ocean, their shields and spear-points glittering in the sun. The captives taken in battle were made slaves and set at the building of public works, the digging of canals, the making of dromo, the founding of cities with streets, squares, and wharves. The priests and officers drew plans, and the common people with the slaves labored to erect palaces, temples, and pyramids that have outlived the memory of their founders and the deities to whom they were dedicated. All things combined to help on the new civilization, and thus Egypt grew to be a mighty nation and the first that proclaimed herself monarch of the world.

The religion of Egypt, existing in the very earliest days, was a worship of the objects of nature, and to the control of each element was assigned a god,

Hapi the Good, the god of the Nile, who gave the Egyptians a harvest and supplied them with the necessities of life, was at first their chief adoration. Ra, the god of the sun, who each morning sailed over the Arabian mountains in a golden boat, bringing them light and warmth ; Hathor his wife, who presided over the kingdom of the West and received Ra in her arms each evening; Anubis, the god and watcher of the dead, afterward became the objects of their worship ; while Typhon, the demon of evil, in whose hand was the lightning, whose voice was the thunder, and whose breath was the withering sirocco, was the object of their hatred and fear. Later on in Egyptian history the number of deities was increased, and every city had its trinity of god-like protectors, symbolized by the propylæ of the temples and palaces. The stars became the eyes of the gods, and the juxtaposition of certain planets was supposed to have an influence for good or evil on the newly born. Future life was to the Egyptians a certainty. The aalu-fields beyond the Libyan desert were the Islands of the Blest, afterward adopted and believed in by the Greeks, where the body renewed its life and became immortal. With this and the further belief that the soul remained in or near the body, it was their first desire to preserve the latter intact until the day of resurrection. To be denied the right of burial was the heaviest punishment an Egyptian could receive. Out of this arose the embalming of the dead with myrrh, cassia, bitumen, and natron baths ; the covering of the mummy with sheets of gold, pitch, and

varnish; the wrapping in air-tight bandages of linen; and the sealing away in the depths of mountain sepulchers or in pyramids. From their religion sprung the first art—the art displayed in the tombs. At first the gods were symbolized by signs and figures. This gave rise to a language whereby each thing material or immaterial was symbolized by a sign or figure, or by a combination of them. Upon the lid and sides of the mummy-case, and upon the walls of the sepulcher wherein it was laid, were written in these characters or symbols the history of the mummy's life, the account of the death and burial, and the scenes attendant thereon. These symbol-writings or hieroglyphs are in execution but little better than the carvings of the man of the Iron Age. The drawings of the birds, the animals, the figures and representations of commonplace things, are but rude imitations, and aside from their symbolic meaning are intended only to convey an idea of nature. But in the illustrations that accompany them, especially those found on the walls of the tombs, we meet with somewhat of an advance in art, yet in execution only. The Egyptian in the earliest dynasties had not only learned to cut hieroglyphs upon the stone tablets and columns; he had likewise invented color, and upon the walls of the sepulcher, to the best of his ability, he painted the scenes of life, death, and burial relating to the departed. Upon the mummy-case was carved in wood, and painted to resemble life, the portrait of the dead, with eyes of glass; and on the outer wrappings of the

mummy were painted the scarabeus (symbol of immortality), the figures of protecting gods, and vignettes from the Book of the Dead. Within the sepulcher were often placed busts and figures of wood, stone and bronze, representative, again, of the dead. Rude sculpture probably came into existence before painting, and the coloring of carved busts and figures gave rise to the painting of figures upon flat surfaces. The first painting and the first sculpture were sepulchral,\* and the aim of the artist may be said to have been imitation, or at best an attempted reproduction, of nature. They wished the memory of the dead, his likeness and appearance, to be preserved. Language could not do this; so they chose sculpture and painting. These were rude and distorted in molding and drawing, and crude, barbaric, and unnatural in coloring; yet they were as good as the untrained hand and eye of the artist could do. He carved and painted what he saw and as he saw it, not what he thought or felt; for, with some exceptions and aside from the material appearance, he had few thoughts about it. It was reserved for a higher stage of civilization than his to do something more than deal with cold realities. To him was relegated the duty of recording bare facts; and how extremely well he did this, in some cases so far back as the Fourth Dynasty, may be seen by a glance at the engravings of the stone portraits of Nefert and Ra-Hotep, the originals of which are now in the Boulak Museum.

With the growth of the nation, inventions, com-

\* Perrot and Chipiez, *History of Art in Ancient Egypt.*

merce, agriculture, and some of the exacter sciences, such as astronomy, physics, and mechanics, progressed simultaneously. In addition a literature reflective and characteristic of the nation had been established, and two new methods of writing, the hieratic (or priestly) and demotic (or popular), modifications of the hieroglyphic, had developed, in which symbols were represented by certain signs which stood as their equivalents. This literature, primitive as the civilization which it sets forth, relates mainly to the king. It is the record of his goodness, his power, his victories, with statistics of his slain and the number of his captives taken in warfare. When record was made of private life, it was but a repetition of this on a small scale. The great bulk of it was a tale of facts, a statement of reality, a something to be perpetuated to future generations as history, although not undecorated and possibly exaggerated. This literature in the hieroglyphic, hieratic, and demotic characters was set forth in various ways, but chiefly chiseled or painted upon the walls and columns of temples and tombs, or written upon rolls of papyrus. It was usually accompanied by illustrations, and the scribe, the painter, and the sculptor may possibly have been united in one.

As has been said, this literature was generally but a record of fact, whatever the subject chosen, even when the scribe broached the fine art of poetry. There are some examples of it extant, but it is chiefly recitative or descriptive. Of the latter class the poem of Pentaour, a scribe in the reign of Rameses II., is

one of the best. It is nothing but an elaboration of the history of Rameses' conquest over the Khita, interspersed with complimentary adjectives in praise of this monarch and accusations of cowardice and weakness against the Khita and their king. Aside from this quality of praise and dispraise, it is essentially of Egypt, Egyptian, and conveys only a record of fact; a something to sound well upon the Pharaoh's ear, and to stimulate the enthusiasm of his successors. Pentaour the poet, his personality, and what he thought about it all, are absent from the narrative for the very good reason that he was an Egyptian and had very few if any unconventional thoughts on the subject. Moreover it was not then the poet's business to think, but simply to record in rhythmical language.

Coming now closer to the fine arts, we find the architecture of the Egyptians the simplest in design that could be conceived of. The child that builds a house of blocks by placing uprights and laying flat lintels across them for a roof-support suggests the Egyptian structure. It was but the grand elaboration of this simple idea that resulted in the massive temples of the gods and the palaces of the Pharaohs. In the early stages of civilization man is an imitator of what he sees, as we have already noted. The natural cave, with its side walls and flat roof, inhabited by the early Egyptians as a retreat from the heat, became in all probability the model for the temples of Luxor and Karnac. Even the very massiveness and somber grandeur of Egyptian architecture may be attributed

to the imitation of the cave, the walls of which are the mountain's width, and the roof the mountain's height. Variations of the original model sprung up with the advancement of the nation. Cylindrical columns and ornamented capitals were put in to support the façade and the roof; and the pylons without were added as entrance-gates. As in the earlier structures, the main object of the builder seemed to be to erect something so solid that it would endure forever; something so thick that it would resist the heat; something so grand that it would be honorable to the god or the Pharaoh to whom it was dedicated and for whose use it was intended.

Of ornamentation and decoration as displayed in other things than painting and sculpture, as for instance in pottery, glass, arms, and jewelry, we need hardly speak, except to say that they kept even pace with the general progress of Egypt. Decorative art in any age may show skill of hand and eye and yet little of expressive thought; so we need not stop to discuss it, inasmuch as we are already within a realm where ideas are beginning to make themselves faintly apparent. It has already been hinted that the art of Egypt was essentially monarchical and religious;\* and through all its ages of history, from its rise to its fall, it did not vary much from this. The king was the luminary—the very sun itself. The people worshiped him, the poet praised him, the musician sung of him, the architect builded for him, the painter represented

---

\* Perrot and Chipiez.

him in life and death, and the sculptor made great statues of him seated upon his throne—stern, silent, and cold as the granite block from which the figure was cut. The temples, palaces, pyramids, and obelisks contained the records of his public and private life. The priests wrote in hieroglyphs his descent from the gods and the history of his family, and the sculptor cut them in bands around the lofty columns. The architraves, lintels, and door-posts enumerated his battles, while upon the panels of the walls the painter showed him in war and in peace, his interviews with the gods, his recreations and his domestic relations. The tomb of the Pharaoh, hidden away in the heart of the mountains or in the labyrinth of the pyramid, was even more elaborate in painting and sculpture. The walls were covered with the achievements of his life, the lamentations over his death, and the scenes of his burial. Thus the best of art, as the best of everything, was devoted to the glory of the gods and of the Pharaoh, their descendant upon earth. Yet art was not confined alone to deity and royalty. It was too universally known and read by even the humblest of the nation to be anything other than catholic. The nation was educated by it as we moderns are taught by books. It was a part of their literature, history, record, and there is scarcely a scene of Egyptian life that has not been painted or chiseled in some form. Every Egyptian was a Pharaoh in his own household, and in a small way the servant aped his master. His achievements, like those of the king, were set forth with paint-brush and chisel, especially

after death, when his mummy-case and sepulcher bore his likeness and history.

The character of the Egyptian wall-painting is well known. It is merely an outline of form filled in with crude color, and generally devoid of background and perspective. The drawing, though distorted at times, is not without a certain degree of grace and a general truth to nature. Aside from their symbolic or historic meaning, these paintings represent only attempts at imitation or decoration; this, however, with some exceptions. The general figures of bird, beast, and man seen in the representations of Egyptian life are but enlarged and elaborated repetitions of what may be seen in the hieroglyphs. The slender white-kilted Egyptian figure is but a type of the race; and the Pharaohs, and in some respects even the gods, are but elaborations of it. It is not claimed by Egyptologists that these paintings are portraits of individuals, yet this, again, is subject to some exceptions. The color and the form show but an Egyptian type, and this is further exemplified by the variations from it in the pictures of Negroes, Ethiopians, Libyans, and other foreign captives represented in the triumph-scenes of the kings. [ Generally speaking, the Egyptian painter was an imitator of nature in outline: if he had ideas or loftier conceptions of his subjects, other than reality or convention disclosed, he did not and perhaps could not express them, because he lacked the technical skill. But the sculptor, who in the early ages of the monarchy was a maker of stone portraits—a reproducer of simple nature—during the

latter dynasties became somewhat of an expresser of ideas, through the attempt to give to the Pharaohs and the gods their characteristic attributes of power.\*

There was thus a change in the province of art. At first it was almost wholly sepulchral ; but afterward, though the art of the tombs existed as before, a different art sprung up and became an adjunct and an adornment to architecture. The early portrait-sculptors of the Memphitic dynasties were never excelled in their lifelike representations ; but with the nation's growth art became more graceful and monumental, more descriptive and expressive of meaning. Here is a distinct step forward from the realm of facts to that of thoughts regarding facts. In Egyptian art this is apparently slight, yet nevertheless noteworthy as marking the transition. Possibly the new departure had its origin in symbolism. The Sphinx, with the head of a man and the body of a lion, was not intended to represent the doubt and mystery which have been for so many years attributed to it. On the contrary, the head was but that of a king, and the lion's body was but a symbol of the monarch's strength, though the Sphinx at Gizeh symbolized the god Harmachis, or the sun on the horizon. Again, the colossal statues of the Pharaohs were not portraits alone (possibly they were not even that, for one statue often did service as the portrait of successive Pharaohs), but the representations of sublime and godlike power. The attitude of the figure seated upon a throne of stone is that of kingly dignity and

---

\* Perrot and Chipiez.

repose. The impassive face is that of a monarch whom not the presence of a god could cause to tremble or to change. These are attributes of majesty which it may well be fancied were not always in the originals. These are ideas conceived by the sculptor and embodied in the stone. These are the qualities that tend to raise the artist from an imitator to a thinker and a creator. Yet how slight at best was the thought of the sculptor is instanced in the statues and statuettes of the gods. An addition of his own ideas to the figure of the living man before him was a simple effort as compared with the portrayal of the unknown and the unseen gods. Here he was at once thrown upon the resources of his imagination ; and how poorly he fared under these circumstances is shown by the uncouth and eccentric representations of the Egyptian deities. They were molded, in the majority of cases, after the Egyptian type, and in the best examples we find an attempt to set forth the attributes of each : youth to Horus ; maternity to Isis ; power to Osiris ; hideousness to Typhon ; radiance to Ra ; and solemnity and watchfulness to Anubis.

The art of Egypt, though it changed concurrently with the civilization of the land from the Memphitic to the Saitic dynasties, did not advance much, for it was ever hampered by conventions. The people, like the inhabitants of China, never allowed their original ideas to be disturbed or altered by intercourse with other nations. For the main, the ideas conceived in the beginning held sway through eighteen

dynasties of kings,\* and are as apparent in the painting and sculpture of the reign of Rameses II. as in the earlier reign of Chephren. In technical execution the powers of the sculptor were again limited by the poor quality of the tools and the unsuitable hardness or softness of the materials. Indeed, Egyptian art had many things to struggle against; and when it is considered that the country grew from barbaric life to civilization; that its people, so far as we know, borrowed from none but were original in all things, it will not be surprising to us that three thousand years produced but an imitative, decorative, and symbolic art—an art bordering upon something higher, which, however, it never fully attained. It was but the reflection of a people who had known and submitted to facts for centuries, and who just as they began to conquer through ideas were destined to perish.

An inquiry into the art of Chaldæa and Assyria and its offshoots would show but a repetition of that of Egypt. The civilization upon the Tigris and Euphrates was nearly the same as that upon the Nile, though it never reached the height of the latter; and the art reflected every stage of this progression, beginning with decoration and imitation and passing to symbolism. Their literature was first expressed in hieroglyphs called ideograms, and afterward by combinations of wedge-shaped forms. This literature was but a chronicle of facts regarding themselves, their kings, and their gods, principally the two latter. Their

---

\* Perrot and Chipiez.

architecture was molded by the circumstances of climate and the needs of the people, and was much decorated with sculptured bas-reliefs, glazed and colored tiles, alabaster slabs, and mural paintings. At the portals of the palaces stood enormous winged bulls and lions, representative both in decoration and symbolism; the head, being that of a king, symbolized wisdom, the wings swiftness, the body power.

Painting was scarcely worthy of the name, with these nations. It consisted of the coloring of statues and the decoration of tiles and wall-spaces. The tomb, a chief cause and subject of painting with the Egyptians, was unknown to the Assyrians, and even to this day their burial-places remain undiscovered. Sculpture was their highest art, and was generally a votive offering to the king or the gods, never advancing beyond imitation facts and ornamentation, except in its symbolism. It was not so graceful in execution as the Egyptian sculpture, but excelled in conveying ideas of strength—that characteristic of the Assyrian people.

The same character of art—that is, the imitative, decorative, and symbolic—is apparent in the civilizations of India, Phœnicia, and Cyprus. The early art of Greece may also be used for illustration. It is the art marking the earliest periods of civilization, when people deal alone with facts, and is apparent in every nation that rises from barbarism unaided by outside influences. Greece may be said to have shown it less than the others we have mentioned because she was not wholly an original nation, but inherited much from Phœnicia, Assyria, and Egypt.

## CHAPTER II.

### ART CLASSICAL AND SYMMETRICAL.

BEFORE treating of the subject of this chapter another caution must be given against the too literal acceptance of the statement that art is a reflection of the civilization producing it. In a general sense it is such a reflection, but rather of the spirit and nature of that civilization than of its extent. Often-times a culture like that of England, to-day, produces no corresponding art, because the spirit of that culture is not in full sympathy with art as was the case with Greece, and as is the case, in a lesser degree, with contemporary France. Art, though showing the varied progress and intellectual development of a people, is dependent for its own excellence more upon their common sympathies. It is an outgrowth of feeling rather than of mere mentality, although it finds expression by means of intellectual growth. This was apparent in the art of Egypt and Assyria, which not only recorded the greatness of those civilizations, but showed the nature and inclinations of the different races. It was a necessity with them, for, aside from its decorative effect, it was the literature of the people—the symbolic language seen and read by all. We shall presently see the same sympathy exemplified and illustrated in the art of Greece. Fo

art was the prophet of Greek mythology. Through it alone the great gods became approachable. Before the statues as the representatives of deity the people prayed and offered sacrifices. In the early periods of post-apostolic Christianity we find the same dependence upon art. The Gospel was taught by pictures symbolizing certain features and doctrines of the faith. It was Gregory the Great who wrote: "Paintings ought to be retained in the churches in order that those ignorant of letters may as it were read by looking on the walls what they are not able to read in the manuscripts." The introduction of art as a means of religious education made it familiar, well understood, and appreciated by the people; and it was in part the growth of this sympathy that resulted in the works of the High Renaissance.

With England, however, it has been utterly different. Art has never been a teacher, a religion, or a vital essential of the English people. The early ages cared little for it; nor have the later times given it anything like a popular and race support, because never dependent upon it, either for education or expression. Yet note the long line of English poets! Poetry has flourished because felt and appreciated by the whole race, from the days of the bards and minstrels, from Merlin and Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table, to the present time. This literary inclination makes itself manifest in English painting, which has been justly criticised because of its literary, "tell-a-story" subjects. To-day many of the English artists are incapable of looking at subjects pictorially.

They see them from a literatesque point of view on account of their literary bias. Let us be careful, then, that in accounting for art we reason not from the extent of a nation's civilization alone, but take into consideration the nature of that civilization and the characteristics of the people producing it.

Again, it is a general rule that all the arts and sciences advance together; but this is not without many exceptions. These are not so apparent in the early stages of human progress as in later times. Homer lived and sung when the arts were unborn, or at least in their infancy. The Roman civilization, though advanced in some of the sciences, produced no art except architecture worthy of the name; and in the literary age of Shakspeare and his contemporaries there was no corresponding sculpture or painting produced in England. In our own time and country the civilization is extensive and wholesome; the sciences and the more matter-of-fact industries are well developed; but as an offset to them the arts, with some brilliant exceptions, are flippant—witness the poetry, novels, pictures, plays, operas, decorations. As our argument advances, therefore, it will be necessary, while following the general tendency upward and onward, to use caution in drawing too rigid deductions; and it will also be necessary to choose the arts best suited to exemplify our classifications.

In the early days of which we have spoken almost all the arts were decorative, imitative, symbolic. In the succeeding period, called "classical," poetry, pair

ing, sculpture, architecture, music, the drama, all developed proportionately; but we shall deal mainly with sculpture, as the art best suited to illustrate the period.

**GREEK ART.**—In its geographical distribution Greece was a land of mountains and of rivers; of hills covered with Arcadian woodlands; of groves and grottoes of poetic fancy; of valleys and sea-shores; of sheltered bays and commanding promontories. A land of beauty with a mild and a congenial climate, it offered in many respects superior advantages to its inhabitants; yet in the products of the earth it was not so prodigal as was the valley of the Nile. The soil was ungrateful and required activity on the part of its cultivators to yield a livelihood, so that the Greek early became a man of energy, invention, and self-reliance. He could not dream away life like the Egyptian, for no Nile furnished him subsistence with little work. He had to struggle for existence, and his dependence was solely upon his own brawn of arm and shrewdness of thought. Under such conditions a vigorous and independent race sprung up that could not for a moment have tolerated the arbitrary rule of a Pharaoh. Liberty was the birth-right of the people, and the conditions of life served but to increase it. And this liberty was not alone one of bodily freedom from monarchical rule, but a freedom of the mind to think, to originate, and to develop. Out of this liberty of thought sprung philosophy, and from the cleverness and the cultivation of the Greek mind grew that appreciation of the beauti-

ful which afterward found its noblest expression in art. Yet, again, this beauty was an inheritance from nature, for Greece was a symmetrically beautiful land, a land of poetry and song where the sun shone brighter, the skies and seas were bluer, the mountains more picturesque, and the valleys more softly fair than any the eyes of man had looked upon. Beauty surrounded the Greek on every side. It was his environment. He was in the midst of it, saw it always before him, and could not but think about it continually, until at last he took the coloring of his surroundings and became beautiful himself. It is not strange that out of beautiful nature sprung beautiful man. It would be stranger had it been otherwise, for a people or a race cannot choose but show physically the influence of the climate and the land in which they live. For the Greeks as a race to have been ugly or ill-formed would have been an abnormal freak of nature equivalent to the Ethiop being white or intellectually great, or the Esquimo being blackened by the wind and sun. So the Greek in his beautiful land grew beautiful, and heightened beauty as he grew, until at last he produced a civilization and an art the greatest the ancient world ever knew.

The origin of the first settlers in Greece is shrouded in obscurity. It is most probable that they originated with the tribes of Western Asia, and that Greek civilization came about, not by a gradual rise from savagery and the development of patriarchal and monarchical sway, but by the despotism of Semitic mer-

chant princes who colonized the land and extended their influence.\* Whoever they were and wherever they originated, they came as semi-barbarians and grew, as other nations have grown, by a course of many years, to civilization. To follow the steps of the early trading, pirating, adventuresome Greek is not necessary here, and would but lead to a repetition of former pages; let us therefore begin our inquiry somewhere near the point of progress to which we traced the Egyptian.

The First Period of Greek national life dates from the time when as a nation her people began to have dealings with other nations. This was about 580 B.C., though Greece through Phœnicia had long before become conversant with Egyptian and Assyrian ideas. At this date the tribal barbarism of the early dwellers in Hellas had passed away and given place to civilization. Politically the country had been divided into independent states, each possessed of a government the laws of which afforded ample protection to all its citizens; and almost immediately a communistic national life, a unity for mutual protection, happiness, and welfare, was brought about, developing that strong kindred spirit and feeling which was the foundation of Greek independence. The individual was incorporated with and became a factor in the state. A selfish struggle for existence was almost unknown at this time, and all alike lived, struggled, fought, and died for the honor of the gods

---

\* Mahaffy, *Social Life in Greece*.

and the glory of the state. The chief industry of the people from the beginning seems to have been a commerce among themselves and with neighboring nations, for which an unexcelled coast-line with good harbors offered them the best facilities. Agriculture was likewise a pursuit, though the more abject classes and the slaves tilled the soil; for the Greek civilian had already grown to be a warrior, a politician, and a citizen, discussing wars, treaties and state affairs, and despising all menial toil. His education as a freeman led him to this. A physical training in athletic sports, and an intellectual proficiency in adroitness and deception, acquired in public places, fitted him for a soldier and a defender of the state. And there was need of his service, for the arts of war as well as those of peace had been cultivated. Well equipped and skillfully conducted armies existed in all the states, and already Greece had passed through the Trojan, the Messenian, and the Corcyraean wars.

From the earliest ages a religion akin to that of Egypt had been known in Greece, and a constellation of gods whom the Greeks called the relatives of the Egyptian and Assyrian deities had been established, to whom sacrifices and hymns of praise were offered. Religious belief in the power and wisdom of the gods was universal and compulsory, and unbelief, even far down in Greek history, as instanced in the case of Socrates, was punishable with death. Founded in part upon this religion, philosophy had arisen, and Thales and Anaximander had es-

tablished systems of cosmology which stimulated thought, if they did nothing more. A literature, written in a language itself suggestive of poetry,—a language so simple and yet refined as to be characteristic of the Greek nature,—had long been known. Poetry appears in the very beginnings of Greek history, for Homer and Hesiod and the Hesiodic bards had sung and died, and “it was from Homer that the poets drew their inspiration, the critics their rules, and the philosophers a defense of their opinions.”\* Music, the complemental art of poetry, or, as the Greeks interpreted it, “poetry sung,” had likewise come to the land with the early Phrygians, and both vocally and instrumentally was practiced in processions and at the festivals in honor of the gods.

In architecture the early structure of the Pelasgians had passed away before the temple of the Darians, the model of which with all its somber massiveness was probably taken from Egypt. Its style comported well with the rude simplicity of those early days; but as civilization advanced, the temple, originally of wood, was changed to stone, and costly structures of great extent were put up at Ephesus, Assos, Samos, and Olympia. These stone temples seem to have been modeled after the wooden ones, for in the change of material the effect of carpentry is still maintained. The beam-ends became triglyphs, the vacant spaces between became

---

\* Pope.

metopes, the rafter-ends mutules.\* In the stone more than in the wood the massiveness of the structure became apparent, and yet its simplicity was no less maintained. This heavy architecture of the Dorians had its parallel art in the sculpture of the time, which was little more than its handmaiden of ornamentation. Rude in form and feature, and representative almost exclusively of Homeric gods and goddesses, this sculpture was set up in the temples and public places and on the altars, for religious worship, very much as were in later times the figures of Christian saints and martyrs in the churches of Europe. Modeled of wood, terra-cotta, silver, and gold, the hard archaic treatment of the figures renders them of but little interest as works of art apart from history. They show Asiatic influence and are lacking in technical development. The gods whom they represented were vague and ill-formed in the minds of the people, and consequently appeared so in sculpture. There was little or no attempt to individualize them by characteristics of form or feature, and the only way they were distinguished was by the symbols which they generally bore. Ornamentation and decorative art, however, even in Homer's time were carried to a high stage of elegance. Household utensils, drinking-cups, plates, vases, all were decorated, and the coats of mail, the shields, tripods, and swords, formed of brass, gold, and silver, were marvels of workmanship. Painting had as yet become

---

\* K. O. Müller, *Ancient Art and its Remains*.

no more than a part of decoration. It was confined to coloring the statues of the gods, and the earliest painting on vases which followed was first practised by the Corinthians.

The Second Period of Greek civilization may be dated down to about 400 B.C., and includes the beginning, the progress, and the ending of the Periclean Age of splendor—in art the greatest in all Greece. During this period the Greeks had been almost constantly engaged in warfare. The Ionian cities had been subjugated by Crœsus, king of Lydia, and he, in turn, had been conquered by Cyrus. But Ionia revolted under Aristagoras, and the independent states of Greece were called upon for help, and swarmed together, making common cause against the enemy. Sardis was burned and the Persians were repulsed. Darius reconquered the Greek coast bordering on Asia Minor, and, not forgetful that Athens had participated in the revolt, he brought his army to Marathon, where Miltiades and the ten thousand met and defeated him. Athens then rose to power; but in 480 B.C. Xerxes led the third Persian expedition, which survived Thermopylæ, took Athens and burned it. The Persians next encountered the Greek fleet at Salamis, and were repulsed with great loss. This repulse, followed by their defeat at Platæa, resulted in the deliverance of all Greece from their yoke. After this Athens became the leading state, and the city was rebuilt with great splendor. Comparative peace reigned for a time, and all things flourished. The Persians had been driven

off, but the Greeks soon quarreled among themselves, and for twenty-seven years the Peloponnesian War raged and wasted the energies of the country, ending only in the capture and political downfall of Athens, 404 B.C.

The influence of long and stubborn wars upon a people is to make the men warriors and the women worshipers of deeds of strength. The education of the warrior is chiefly a physical training, and his disposition in the ancient days was not unlike what it is in these modern times. The pain of battle was borne with fortitude; but after pain the pleasure of banqueting, worshiping, loving, beautifying, became greater. It is not strange, then, that the Greek warrior despised the life of the shepherd and the tiller of the soil. These, with all other pursuits and services of a menial kind, were relegated to the slaves of warfare; and the master, liking not humble toil, shut himself up in elegant cities, frequenting for instruction the temples and the groves, and for amusement the theaters, the squares, the palæstra, the stadion, and the gymnasium. His subsistence came from the gain of commerce and the spoils of war; while his aspirations were satisfied in the glory of his city, its power, art, wisdom, and protecting gods. Yet the life of the Greek was neither idle nor luxurious, and the severe simplicity of his character was such as became a warrior. His wants were few and easily satisfied. In private he oftentimes lived poorly, even niggardly; in public and as a unit of the state he lived in splendor. All things went to the glory of the common-

wealth. Individual wealth was unusual and reproachful, and personal aims unpatriotic. In order to maintain his rank as a citizen and a soldier, the education of the Greek became at first a physical training, and, as the nation grew, the wise saying of Chilon, "Know thyself," began to be more diligently studied with special reference to the body. The first two wishes of the Greek, according to the ode of Simonides, were for health and for beauty.\* The development of the body became a matter of every one's care. Indeed, from Homeric days the perfect man, among the Greeks, was the man of muscular symmetrical figure. To aid the development of this figure, as few garments as possible were worn, and these of a loose character easily cast aside. In the games and athletic contests the naked body was always freely displayed and publicly gloried in. It was a custom of the land, and one of the many free habits pointing to the simplicity of the people. To be ill-formed or crippled was a reproach, and in Sparta it was death. To attain symmetry of form was one of the first ambitions of the Greek youth; and, hence, from the beginning the athletic games had been followed by all classes. In this second period of Greek civilization the education of the physical man from being an occasional and social matter became a public concern, and the Olympian, Pythian, Nemean, and Isthmean games were nationally recognized. People from all Greece flocked to them to witness the contests in

---

\* Winckelmann,

wrestling, boxing, running, leaping, throwing the disk, and hurling the spear. Honors and prizes were given to successful competitors, and the victorious athlete became an object of the highest admiration. The state freed him from duties and gave him presents of money; the poet sung his praises, and the sculptor molded an ideal figure to him which was placed in the Olympic grove—one of the highest of honors. Beauty of the body became a passion of the people, yet its cultivation at this time was not excessive. The muscles were developed only to a harmonious degree, not abnormally, as was the case later on. The pugilist, the wrestler, and the athlete were not now of brutal proportions, but symmetrically built, not overstepping or falling short of the perfect ideal proportion. This should be remembered, for the history of the best Greek sculpture is but a history of the development of the national games. It was from the latter that the sculptors took their models; and if this perfect physical man is taken into consideration, together with the plastic character of Greek thought which led the people to frame ideas by means of objects seen in the mind, we have the key to the predominant features of the Phidian marbles.

During this period the cultivation of the body, though a strong feature of Greek education, was not the only one by any means. There could scarcely be an advance like that of the Periclean Age except by development in many directions. The Assyrians worshiped strength of body, somewhat like the Greeks, but

they had no great strength of mind, and it was to the cultivation of this latter quality that the Greeks gave a special attention. That philosophy upon which all subsequent philosophies have more or less leaned for support was now growing stronger and stronger. Thales and Anaximander had been succeeded by Pythagoras, Anaximenes, Xenophanes, Parmenides, and Zeno of Elea; but their failure to establish a cosmological system became apparent, and a new school of inquiry into the origin and limits of knowledge advanced with Heraclitus, Anaxagoras, Empedocles and Demoćritus. They could not establish a basis of certitude, and their theories were in turn succeeded by skeptical indifference. The school of the Sophists arose with Prodicus and Protagoras, but this could not last. Socrates came, and by the application of dialectics as a negative argument prepared the way for inductive inquiry. And Greece was making no inconsiderable progress in science. Law and government under Solon were becoming better known; war was being perfected by such generals as Aristides, Alcibiades, and Pericles; and historians and travelers like Herodotus were bringing back to Greece the ideas and improvements of other nations. The purely subjective arts, such as music, poetry, and eloquence, were keeping pace with the advance. The Phrygian music with its somber numbers was still used; but now the martial notes of the Doric were introduced, and shortly afterward the gay cadences of the Ionic and the Attic. The epic poetry of Homer and Hesiod had been succeeded by something more

suitable to the realm of beauty, something better fitted to accompany the flow of song ; something more in keeping with the spirit of the people. Sappho, Anacreon, Simonides, and Pindar came singing the lyric. Moreover, in this fifth century the drama rose to its most exalted height with the trio Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides. Nothing can better illustrate Greek life throughout than the tragedies of these writers; and the secret of their greatness, even to this day, lies chiefly in their simplicity, that strong characteristic of the Greeks to which we must so often refer.

But possibly the greatest advance in the practical affairs of this period was in the building and elaboration of the cities. The marble quarries of Paros had been recently opened, and these furnished excellent materials. Public buildings, temples, squares, fountains, aqueducts, gardens, all sprang into existence as by the stroke of an enchanter's wand in this blooming time of Greece. And the Greek had advanced wonderfully in conception of form and outline. The massive Doric temple was modified to a lighter and more symmetrical structure, which in Athens found its noblest expression in the Attic-Doric Parthenon, without doubt the most perfect structure ever erected. Besides the lighter Doric, a new style of architecture came in during the Periclean Age, called the Ionic, a more volatile and oriental art-product,\* and one better suited in sentiment and beauty to the then prevalent Ionic music and lyric poetry. From use and

---

\* K. O. Müller.

strength in the beginning grew grace and beauty, and these, as we shall see hereafter, developed into elegance, affectation, and ultimate decay.

All the branches of knowledge seem to have advanced contemporaneously at this time, but we shall see the classic mind of the Greek better displayed in sculpture than in the other departments. The early age of sculpture in Greece had been one of struggles with the technical conditions of the art. The artist could not express his conception, because lacking the requisite skill. The human form was not well reproduced, was clumsily joined in the parts, over-muscular, hard in line, and awkwardly posed. Again, the artist's conception was vague and ill-defined. His subjects were the Homeric gods, and these he strove to show by the existing forms of humanity. To do this, he copied the most perfect forms to the best of his ability; but the attributes of the gods were not apparent in the face or figure, and the ideas of the sculptor were but slightly suggested. With the progress of Greek civilization, however, and the nationalization of the athletic games, the human form grew to be the sculptor's and the people's study. It became better comprehended, and this superior knowledge was directly reflected in the work that followed. New materials were now used, and in the place of the stone and wooden figures appeared chryselephantine, marble, and bronze statues. The demand for sculpture as an adjunct to architecture became greater. Metope, frieze, and pediment required adornment, and the time and skill of the artist were

taxed to the greatest capacity. The cold, expressionless, and stiff figures began to bend and move. Life appeared, and the rigidity of archaism was broken. In the age immediately preceding Phidias, Pythagoras of Rhegium seems to have been the first artist of much importance, and that his art was directly due to the influence of the games is proved, to a great extent, by his subjects being chiefly athletes. In these figures he seems to have excelled in portraying the symmetry, rhythm, and harmony of the body. After him Myron succeeded in making the outer form reflect the physical life. His faces showed nothing but good carving, but his forms were posed in the intense moments preparatory to activity, as is instanced in the Marsyas and Discobolus. His contemporary, Calamis, though representing life in the body, and famous for the grace and charm of his female figures, stopped not there, but gave to each figure its peculiar attributes, and to each face its peculiar expression. He made the soul speak through the features, and in his art we see the first expression of what was known as "the Greek ideal." Still these men, though releasing sculpture from archaism, did not and could not satisfy the longing for ideality,\* and it was reserved for Phidias to fully develop what his predecessors had strongly suggested.

In treating of the ideal in Greek art, the word must not be confounded with "the ideal" of to-day as it is understood in its contemporary application. Our

---

\* L. M. Mitchell, *A History of Ancient Sculpture*.

*ideal* is but an imaginary type, "a form seen in the mind," a memory gathered from many impressions ; and in works of art it is likely to be as characterless as it is agreeable to the eye. The Greek *ideal* was something entirely different. In the first place, the Greek physically was the most perfect man imaginable. It was his inheritance from the land and climate, and this heritage was improved through many years by athletic training and the natural development of the race. In Sparta none but the perfect were permitted to live ; none but the perfect were ever perpetuated in the statues ; none but the perfect received the admiration of the judges and the applause of the people. Lessing quotes a Greek epigrammatist as saying to a cripple : "Who would want to paint you, when no one would want to look at you?"\* Undoubtedly the Greek, physically, was more perfectly formed than any human being before or since his day. But all bodily perfections centered in no one person. Some excelled in one thing and some in another, and the form that excelled in all things was not of man, but attributed only to the gods. To represent the gods, then, the Greek sculptor generalized the human form and was eclectic. He combined the excellences of the many into one perfect whole, and thus made a new and individual form.† This gave him the physical *ideal* of his art. In the second place,

---

\* G. E. Lessing, *Laokoön*.

† Waldstein, *Essays on the Art of Pheidias*.

the Greek mind was as approximately perfect as any that has ever existed. His mental qualities were not inferior to his physical, but on a par and in harmony with them. Yet, again, as with the body, the mind and soul were not perfected in any one mortal. It was only by the uniting of the qualities taken eclectically from the many that a complete soul and mind could be made up which would correspond to that attributed to the gods. Thus, through eclecticism, the mental and moral *ideal* was established, creating a new mind and soul. These physical, mental, and moral ideals it was the sculptor's aim to unite and harmonize in one creation. The result would be the perfect god, symmetrical in body, soul, and mind. To represent this was the attempt and accounted for the inspiration and the success of Phidias.

The sculpture of the Periclean age, commanded almost entirely by Phidias, is too well known to be particularized or to call for much comment. In its regard for the limits of the art, in its subjects, and in its realization of the ideal, it has never been equaled. The form was that shown in the games, and was the harmonious normal and perfect figure, neither exaggerated by strength nor falling short of full development. The mental and moral ideas were such as befitted the incomparable gods, and were plainly visible in the look, the pose, the attitude. Zeus was possessed of all majestic power. Athena, in her peace-giving character, was the personification of dignity and wisdom; and the Aphrodite of Alcamenes "was graced with every gentle womanly

charm." The subjects chosen for sculpture during this age were the loftiest known to the Greek mind—the great gods themselves. These were represented, not in violent action or under excited conditions, but in repose and with the dignity becoming the dwellers on Olympus. The representation of soul and thought in the statues was apparent, but it was passive, not active; reserved, not demonstrative; silent, not boisterous. In addition, the grandeur and sublimity of the best work of Phidias was materially heightened by the colossal proportions, as instanced in the Olympian Zeus and the Parthenonic Athena. In technical execution the art of Phidias was of the first excellence, as the Elgin marbles (and these are but decorative sculptures) still bear witness. That it was superior to the execution of his successors Scopas and Praxiteles, as is claimed by many, may well be doubted.

As a whole, the sculpture produced during the Periclean age, in its perfect blending of the physical, mental, and moral, is the best example of classical and harmonious art that can be offered for illustration. It most truly reflects the symmetrical character of the Greek people; and although after Phidias art in Greece changed rather than declined, yet in conception it never equaled that of the preceding age.

The Third Period in Greek art may be dated from the close of the Periclean Age to the death of Alexander the Great (400 B.C. to 323 B.C.\*), during which time many changes in the political and social conditions of

---

\* Mitchell.

the Greeks took place. With the end of the Peloponnesian War Athens lost her political supremacy and fell before her jealous neighbors. Sparta came into power, and it in turn was plunged into four wars in succession—the Elean, the Corinthian, the Olynthian, and the Theban. The unity of the Greek states was broken; in 338 B.C., Philip of Macedon overran and conquered them; and with his successor, Alexander (336 B.C.), began foreign conquest and that reign of luxury which in all nations is the forerunner of decay.

Yet despite its wars and internal convulsions Greece flourished continuously. Its commerce, science, philosophy, and power became greater than ever; its learning reached the very highest pitch of ancient excellence; and its influence tintured the civilization of the whole world. Such was its great virility that the decay became manifest only after many years, and that at first not so much by a falling off as by a change in the national ideas and impulses. This became noticeable with the dissolution of the states. The national spirit and public trust began to fail. Each state sought its own welfare, and within the state each individual sought selfish advancement. How great this last evil became, the orations of Isocrates, Æschines, Demosthenes, Lysias, and Lycurgus, against private munificence and public poverty, will prove. The greatness and simplicity of the Greek character began to decline. The rich vied with one another in splendor; luxury and vice crept in; and, worst of all for art, faith in the great gods was shaken, and skepticism sprung up. In the place

of the early gods Zeus, Athena, and Hera, were substituted the lesser deities Plutos (Riches), Tyche (Fortune), and Eirene (Peace).\* The other gods were likewise represented, but with less of the ideal and more of the human about them. In fact, the tale of humanity now began. The ideal was changing, not passing away, before the spirit of the new era. The people in their conceptions were less grand, but more passionate. The popular thought was lighter, and the love of pleasure in the festivals, processions, and games became excessive. But though the Greek changed in many respects, his nature was not as yet greatly altered. His mind had become broadened by contact with other nations, and a cosmopolitan culture was more universally diffused; yet still his inclinations had varied but little. More elegant, and of an elegance bordering on the luxurious, he was still a lover of beauty in all its varieties—beauty of form, thought, speech, deed. The temple, the theater, the agora, the games, the groves, were still his chief places of resort, and the man of strength, mental, moral, and physical, was his admiration.

The transition of popular ideas soon became apparent in the different branches of learning. In accordance with the shifting thought of the people, philosophy had inverted the glass from without upon the human mind within. Plato, the last great exponent of the ideal and the abstract, gave way before Aris-

---

\* Mitchell.

totle, the philosopher of the real and the concrete. The tragedies of Æschylus and Sophocles were superseded by the comedies of Aristophanes and Menander, in which humanity was dealt with and the vices of the time exposed to ridicule. The poets became more expressive of purely human thought and emotion; lyric song, under Philoxemus, Telestes, and Phrynius, was corrupted both morally and rhythmically;\* music grew to be the note of passion; and architecture displayed itself in theaters and odeia, blossoming with Ionian and Corinthian elegance. At this time, and in this period, painting is said to have arisen, and in three great stages reached perfection in the works of Apelles, Zeuxis, and Parrhasius. But for Greek perfection in painting we have to take the words of the ancient writers; as, except the vases, nothing is preserved to us. Yet there is no reason to think that Greece, so complete in all other arts, was lacking here. It may be taken for granted that Greek painting was quite equal to the sculpture, for the one received as much praise from the ancients as the other; but we cannot speak of its style, because there is nothing upon which criticism could be based.

In the marbles and bronzes of the period we may follow the change in the people as truly as in the open pages of a book. As Dr. Waldstein has well shown, the history of Greek monumental art finds its parallel in the history of the athletic games whence

---

\* K. O. Müller.

came the sculptor's models. In and before the Periclean Age the games were indulged in moderately, for pleasure and profit, by all classes. The body was well developed, but not by any means abnormally so. How far this development was carried the Phidian marbles from the Parthenon will show. It will be seen from them that there is nothing brutal or heavy in the make-up of the figure. The muscular development is not out of proportion to the size of the body. Both are symmetrical and harmonious. But, after the change in the Greek people consequent upon the dissolution of the Pan-Hellenic unity, as we have shown, they became individualized, selfish, excitable, passionate, pleasure-loving, skeptical, luxurious. The games, from a recreation and an amusement, became a business and a profession. The athlete, the pugilist, the disk-thrower, and the wrestler became experts. The heretofore well-rounded body became massive and lumpy, and this figure was the new model of the sculptor, the vase-painter, the die-sinker, and the gem-cutter. It was the admiration of the time, the new ideal body with which the lesser gods were represented. An example of it in latter times is the ponderous Heracles; but this is an exceptional case. The forms of the gods (not the great gods, for they had been almost entirely abandoned) were not so exaggerated as the Heracles, but were thoroughly humanized to meet the requirements of the new taste. It will be remembered that art, to a great extent, had now passed from the care of the state and was in the hands of the individual,

and his taste was in reality that of the people. It sought after things fierce, fiery, sensuous, and the sculptor again satisfied the popular desire. Before Phidias the body was of more importance than the face; but now the latter mirrored forth the depths of human passion. Love, hate, fury, pride, anger, all came forth and formed the attributes of the different characters. Again, the simplicity and repose in the figures of the Phidian marbles gave place to violent and dramatic action. The soul and thought, which in the former period had been represented passively, were now positively expressed. The body was represented in motion or posed at some critical period of action. Muscles were strained and contorted, and torsos were twisted, and heads thrown back, forward, or to the side, in moods of passion. This is admirably instanced in the Amazon frieze of the Mausoleum of Halicarnassus, now in the British Museum, and in the Niobe group at Florence, both of which are attributed to this time. It must not be inferred that all the sculpture was of this class, but rather that this class was characteristic of the period. The gods were still often represented in repose, but instead of the Phidian gods of grandeur "we meet a fluctuating throng, in which we see the forms of the maternal Demeter, proud Niobe, charming Aphrodite, bewitching Eros, raving Bacchante, and pleasure-loving Dionysios."\* Grace rather than grandeur, beauty rather than sublimity, sensuousness and elegance rather than purity

---

\* Mitchell.

and simplicity, were stamped upon the marbles. Especially was this true of the female figure, which became more humanly beautiful than ever before. Effeminate charms were given it, and the intenser emotions of the simply passionate showed in face and form. The tendency toward naturalism received a fresh impetus when portraiture in stone was introduced. Under Alexander, not only he himself had his stone likeness, but the athlete who had been thrice victorious in the games was entitled to a portrait-statue, which was placed in the Olympian grove. This was a positive departure from previous rule, which before Alexander had followed *the ideal*, not only in the god and in the human, but in the animal.

Athens, though she had lost her political supremacy, still influenced the art-productions of this third period. She was too much impoverished to produce much art for herself, but her artists went abroad throughout Greece, and two of them, Scopas and Praxiteles, directed the sculpture of the time. As has been said, the ideal was now more human than divine, yet nevertheless harmonious. The subjects chosen were the lesser gods, heroes, athletes, horses, lions, dogs; and although these were not so simply great in themselves as those of the former age, yet the excellence of the workmanship bestowed upon them compensated in a measure for the loss of majesty. All the stiffness of archaic work vanished. The figures, instead of being seated in erect attitude, or standing with one foot thrust forward, were now represented gracefully leaning against

some support—a tree or stone carefully placed and oftentimes concealed by the folds of the drapery. The pose was easy, and there was a flow of line—what has been called *plastic rhythm*—about the whole figure. This was brought about not alone by the grace of the pose, but by the *technique* of the statue. The modeling was as near perfection as the art of sculpture has ever attained; the proportions were well maintained, and the parts ran easily together as in nature. Again, there was a rhythm in the formation of the muscles; the smooth texture of the skin was almost deceptively rendered; and the qualities (the flow and fall) of the draperies most natural and effective. Great attention was given to the perfecting of the human form in all its parts,—the hands, feet, hair, skin, muscles; and the tendency toward literalism was plainly marked in the copying of minute details, as may be instanced in the works of Lysippus, who belonged to the latter end of the period, and who favored more the technical side of art than its expression of grand conceptions.

The Hellenistic Age of Greek art, dating from the death of Alexander to the fall of the Pergamon dynasty (323 B.C. to 133 B.C.), is marked by the decline of Greek power and, in a lesser degree, Greek art. After the death of Alexander the land was divided among his generals. This led to the establishment of despoticisms and independent states, and naturally factional wars ensued. Greece was continually under Macedonian oppression; but at last there followed a period of peace during which certain cities flourished. Then

fresh troubles came in the shape of the invading barbarians—the Galatians—who overran parts of Greece. The smaller states, to escape the barbarians, sought protection of Rome, and were absorbed in the empire of the protector. This was finally the fate of the remainder, and thereafter the dominion of the ancient world passed into the hands of the Romans.

The decline of the nation politically finds its complement in the degeneration of the people as a race. The strong brotherhood of unity, which had been the great factor in the rise of the Greek nation, was now entirely broken. Liberty was lost, and the national spirit crushed. In their place was substituted an exaggeration of the selfishness which we have noted in the preceding period. Each state more than ever fought for its own advancement, and within the state the individual sought his own interest. Nationality gave way to a condition little better than slavery. Some few commercial cities gathered to themselves wealth and power, and their rulers established magnificent courts, around which like satellites revolved the now degenerate Greeks. Immorality, corruption, faithlessness, crime, grew like cancers in the flesh. The habits and tastes of the individual changed likewise. He became more servile and hypocritical, and, though still a warrior, an adventurer or a cunning merchantman, he was also a voluptuary, a sensualist, and a lover of the purely human. The games were still his delight, but these had passed the bounds of moderation. Either brutal or wildly exciting, they pleased best when most bordering on the *bizarre* or

the horrible. The festivals and pageants were extravagant and theatrical; and in art the popular taste ran to the violent and the striving after effect. Standards of judgment were swept away, temperance was forgotten, and the caprice of the passing moment prevailed, now leading to sensualism and riotousness, and then returning to stoicism and indifference. The religion of the gods was openly doubted or denied. Many adopted the religion of Isis and Mithras; for while Greece had been hellenizing the East, the East had likewise been orientalizing Greece, and much of the dazzling glamour of the Orient found its way into Greek life. The colonization of the nations conquered by Alexander resulted in a scattering of forces. Instead of a small community bound together by a general sympathy and purpose, the Greeks now became cosmopolitan. The synthetic and the ideal died out, and in their stead arose the scientific and the analytic. The time was come for an acceptance of realities rather than a worship of idealities. The seed planted in good faith by Aristotle brought forth the fruit of materialism. The philosophy of the age in Epicurus taught that the gods existed, but cared for neither the weal nor woe of man. It offered pleasure with temperance as the supreme good, but the Greeks omitted the saving clause and took the pleasure in excess. It was in vain that Zeno the Stoic called upon them to heed Plato, to be virtuous and brave, not corrupt and effeminate. They preferred to misinterpret Epicurus and accept Pyrrhon. The New Academy, under Arcesilaus and Carneades, threw

doubt upon everything by teaching the uncertainty of knowing anything positively and the beauty of sophistry. And at last, when one theory after another had been overthrown, the philosophers descended to quibbling and bickering over terms and words. Science was more prosperous, because more in keeping with the spirit of the time; and the advance in geometry, astronomy, philology, and history was shown by the books in the great libraries of Pergamus and Alexandria. In poetry the last vibration passed away with Theocritus, who was not produced by the age, but was rather an emanation of a former civilization, blooming like an exotic on foreign soil. The theater descended to the lowest comedy and burlesque, and when not contemptible was offensively naturalistic. Architecture, though lacking the simplicity of former periods, was not so easily contaminated by the change in the people. Numerous monuments and temples were erected, and in them the Corinthian order prevailed—a light style profusely decorated, yet withal not by any means lacking in beauty or grace.

Sculpture, the most national because best in keeping with the plastic nature of the Greek mind, proved itself in this period to be one of the most enduring of the arts. Throughout Greece generally it declined with the people; but at certain places where commerce produced prosperity it flourished, and was not an unworthy successor of the previous periods. Such were the commercial Rhodes and the court of Pergamus, places which drew to themselves the remaining strength of Greece, and, starting anew, seemed to

revive much of the ancient Greek spirit of art. At these places, fostered by wealth and a still remaining taste, sculpture lived on, and at Pergamus, at least, was great. Some extant marbles, such as the Nikè of Samothrace, with several Apollos and *genre* subjects, prove that in other places of Greece art was neither effeminate nor feeble. Yet these were but healthy spots in an already diseased body. Recent excavations have shown only that the decadence was broken in upon by some wonderful exceptions, for, generally speaking, the substance of art had passed and only the shadow remained. The limits of its ideas seemed to be exhausted. The gods of Homer, the heroes of mythology and poetry, the divine and human ideal, had run their course through the former periods, and now in seeking new fields sculpture passed into the grotesque and artificial. The patronage of art was entirely in the hands of the rulers, and they sought the gratification of their vanity by strivings after effect. The descriptions of the ancient writers of the pageants and banquets wherein sculpture played a mechanical part for decorative and scenic effect, such as the funeral-pile of Hephæstion, the Adonis feast of Arsinoë, and the Ptolemy II. feast of Bacchus, all go to prove the emptiness of artistic thought. Even in such beautiful work as the Great Altar Frieze at Pergamus, and the Laokoön group, there is little plastic repose, but, on the contrary, the most violent action, trenching upon the very uttermost limits of the art. Undoubtedly this was influenced somewhat by the labored seeking after the pictorial effects of painting;

but, aside from this, simplicity seemed to have passed away. Over-elaboration is seen upon the best art of the age,—the Pergamon Frieze,—where even the hair has lost its simple adjustment, the dress has become showy, and the very shoes fantastically decorated. The conception, the basis of monumental art, with the exceptions we have noted, had vanished, but in execution the works of this period were scarcely inferior to the others. The Greeks knew how to chisel long after they had forgotten how to create; and if in this declining age they devoted themselves to realizing a Dying Galatian or a Fighting Persian, it was done with a skill not unworthy of nobler days. Indeed, this skill remained an inheritance of the Hellenes long after decline set in. The impetus of Greek art was not easily checked, and it was not until after the Christian era and on Roman soil that the spent arrow of Ulysses finally fell to earth.

The only indigenous classical art that has ever existed sprung up and decayed with Greece. Since Greek days that which has pretended to be ideal, or "classic," is but its imitation. The art of Rome, when not showing the degeneracy of the last of the Greek artists, was imitative of preceding periods. The so-called classic art of the Renaissance, brought about by the revival of learning and the finding of antiquities, is again only a copying of the Greek methods, and does not contain the Hellenic spirit and thought. Later on, Thorwaldsen and Canova attempted a sec-

ond revival of the classic, and succeeded in producing some handsome works, but utterly lacking in spontaneity. Their efforts, carried on by Stuart and Revett, revived the classic in London, and David did a similar questionable service for Paris, where a phase of it still exists in the *École des Beaux-Arts*. The result of it has been to make good draughtsmen and modelers, and in the work produced this has been the one and only redeeming feature ; but as an art reflective of the people and their sympathies the revived classic fails. It is not original or representative, because the French and English peoples are not, have not been, and never will be, Greeks. We shall presently see that we belong to a different civilization, and for us to attempt the revival of Greek art is as absurd as would be the restoration of Greek religion, law, or methods of warfare.

## CHAPTER III.

### ART EMOTIONAL, INTELLECTUAL, AND INDIVIDUAL.

MAN in the savage state is not unlike a plant, in that he flourishes best where the conditions of life are the most favorable. This is the gist of M. Taine's philosophy applied by him to civilized nations, and it undoubtedly possesses much truth. In the preceding chapters no little stress has been laid upon the climate and its influence upon a people in the beginning; but now we must modify its importance, and for this reason:—a nation in infancy is susceptible to climatic circumstances through very weakness; but a nation in youth or in manhood resists the influence through acquired strength. A slight exposure, a croup, a cold, that easily causes death to the child, is lightly thrown off by the vigor of the man. A rough wind, a storm, or a frost may blast the young bud, but not materially affect the growing tree. Yet naturally the pine grows in the frigid zone, and the palm in the tropics; and whether in infancy or age, the surroundings have somewhat to do with their growth. While, therefore, the importance of climatic influence upon established civilizations must not be overestimated, let it not be entirely disregarded, for undoubtedly it, works in an unseen manner, and molds the people though they may not know it.

In treating of the classical era, it was necessary that we should choose one art for illustration which by reason of its nature was best fitted to exemplify our principles. Sculpture was chosen because dependent upon form and relying for its appreciation more upon the senses than the perceptions. This was in perfect keeping with the nature of the Greek civilization. We now come to the examination of a civilization very different from that of Greece, in that it deals with life less as a matter of the senses and more as a matter of the mind and soul. With Christianity the psychical, the sympathetic, and the emotional nature of mankind became predominantly apparent, and the art best fitted to represent that is painting, because more perceptive than sensuous. The existence of painting as a leading art since the days of Rome may be offered as a proof that it is the proper representative of the Christian civilization.

In the consideration of painting, I must be brief and dwell principally upon causes and tendencies, because as we move onward in human progress the record doubles at every step; and the reader must again be reminded that I am not attempting to detail a history of art, but only using art-history to illustrate principles.

**EARLY CHRISTIAN, MEDIÆVAL, AND GOTHIC ART.**—About the only thing that Rome ever did for the fine arts was to collect the masterpieces of the world into one great funeral-pyre upon which she herself expired. Her men were warriors, rulers, administrators,

but never philosophers, philanthropists, or artists. She consumed the earth, but produced little save her laws and her architecture; and at last, when all was gone, she turned to feed upon herself, and brought on that inward exhaustion which eventuated in her destruction. Weakened by the depopulation of provinces, broken in spirit and public morality, badly governed and illy served in decrepitude, Rome fell before the barbarians of the North. The city was overrun, pillaged, and burned again and again by the Goths and the Vandals, until life was extinct. Then followed five centuries of barbarism succeeding the establishment of the military despotism of the Lombards, and with each century the old pagan civilization sunk lower and lower, until at last it was absorbed in the new civilization of the West.

It is not surprising that Christianity in its beginnings was beset by every conceivable persecution. Its teachings were diametrically opposed to the then existing paganism, and of necessity it encountered opposition from those unwilling to accept its tenets. In the midst of the old it began the new—new life, new faith, new ideas. Its position was exceptionally violent, reactionary, antagonistic. Greece and Rome taught the beauty of the world, the enjoyment of life, the worship of the body. Life was worth the living for the pleasure that it gave, and death was the greatest of all calamities. Even the brave Achilles "would rather be the slave of the meanest living than reign in the kingdoms of the dead." Naturalism, materialism, paganism were predominant, and the ancient making

the most of his little hour went his way to the grave with regret. How radically different was the belief of the early Christians ! To them this world was but a stepping-stone to something better, a place of existence the trials of which but fitted them for life everlasting. Its beautiful valleys were marked by the shadow of death; its overhanging skies, fretted with golden fire, were but a pestilent congregation of vapors ; its human forms but tenements of clay, for the use of the soul soon to be released. Earthly life was at best but transient; celestial life, eternal. Enjoyment was a sin; pleasure, a temptation of the devil; hell, a certainty; and heaven, a blessed abode to be won only by faith, prayer, humility, and mortification. The exaltation of the body was a pagan abomination. The flesh was meant to be debased, not glorified. There was something nobler within to which the outer man should be subservient. The soul lived and was all-absorbent. In the order opposed to the ancients the soul came first and the body last, while the mind (will) was an intermediary to keep the latter in check. The primary thought of the Greek was to perfect the physical; that of the Christian, to perfect the spiritual. How very different was the new view of life from the old may be instanced in the disposition of the body after death. To the Christian, a scant-cut niche in the walls of the gloomy catacombs, sometimes a name or sign above it, and oftentimes nothing at all, was sufficient entombment; but the Greek required as a final resting-place a mausoleum proportionate in magnificence to his rank in life. Another instance of

the difference is shown in the heroes of Greek days,—Apollo, Hercules, Achilles, all excelling by physical prowess,—as contrasted with the hero-martyrs of early Christianity, who, weak and emaciated through mortification and persecution, still possessed strength of soul to endure martyrdom unflinchingly. A third illustration of this complete change in ideas may be seen in the pagan *Odyssey*, as contrasted with the Christian *Divine Comedy*. We follow Homer through a bright world of beauty and pleasure, but Dante leads us into the realms of the supernatural. The one is of humanity, human; the other is aspiring, spiritual, ethereal.

What should be the outcome of the new, strong faith working upon ill-balanced imaginations but fanaticism, hysteria, emotion? These became a stamp upon the people, which suffering and martyrdom but brought out the plainer. Born among enemies, baptized with their own blood, and nurtured upon the bitterest persecutions in the annals of history, the Christians clung to the cross and their faith in Christ, not only with fervid zeal but with fanaticism. For four centuries the new faith lived on, though scourged again and again by Rome; and then for four centuries more it outlived the furious wars of the Goths, the Lombards, and the Franks. But its early light was feeble, at times almost extinguished; and then, again, it flared up and lived on. Step by step and year by year the old paganism dwindled away and a semi-barbarism succeeded. The arts, sciences, literature and learning declined to mere skeletons of their for-

mer selves. The Church was quite supreme in its influence, though continually at strife with the civil authorities. The popes contended not alone for temporal power, as is often supposed, but for independence and Christianity. A struggle began between those wishing a religious, civil, and progressive life and those who sought a continuance of the military and conservative life of the empire. It was a period of strife. The Church was divided even within itself. Councils quarreled, popes excommunicated, institutions were anathematized, and the people were racked by dissensions. Still they clung to their religion and its teachers, and the monasteries were the centers of colonies, under a tributary system analogous to feudalism. The priests became the patrons and diffusers of an ecclesiastical education; but knowledge was wofully lacking, and dogmatism was intolerant of innovation. The leaders of the Church fought secular learning. Tertullian combated the arts, and showed his displeasure with Hermogenes on account of the two sins into which he had fallen,—painting and marriage.\* Gregory the Great prided himself on his bad grammar, and according to his standard culture was antithetical to piety. Speculation bordering on the pagan philosophy was frowned upon as the fruit of the forbidden tree. Boëthius, the last of the classic writers, died in prison in the sixth century, and after him for years literature, except of an ecclesiastical nature, was almost unknown. The ages were

---

\* Draper, *Intellectual Development of Europe*.

barbaric and unenlightened indeed,—well called the Dark Ages! Fanaticism, ignorance, ecclesiasticism ruled, and side by side with the really devout moved the hypocritical and the immoral, even in the Papacy itself.

Whatever knowledge could help the interests of the Church was advocated by the clergy, and so naturally architecture flourished after a time, and painting was used as a means of teaching the Bible to those unable to read. These arts were truly reflective of the Christian civilization, both in their design and accomplishment. The ideal beauty of the Greeks met with opposition from the beginning; it was pagan and of the earth, earthy. The new art debased form, and above it reared ideas and the symbols of ideas. The Egyptian palace represented strength and eternal endurance; the Greek temple represented beauty of form; but the Christian church symbolized the faith of its builders. At first, from using the deserted Roman basilica as a place of worship, and tinctured by the former civilization extending into theirs, the Christians built churches upon the Roman model; but as they grew in strength changes took place. The new idea required a new form impossible to produce at first; but time and change wore away the old and brought in the new. Not alone did the ground-plan of the basilica grow to the form of the cross, but the rows of parallel columns within led the in-comer directly to the altar. The walls were covered with paintings representing sacred scenes. From the vaulted apsis Christ and the Apostles looked down

on the assembled host. Symbols of religious import were on every hand, and a chief aim of the clergy was to make the church the literal house of the Good Shepherd. In the misery, squalor, and ignorance of those dark times the people turned to it as a place of refuge, a heaven on earth, a firm rock though all else should fall. This conception of the church-building, being representative of an idea, grew with Christianity, and after passing through the Romanesque style at last culminated in its complete expression—the Gothic.

Sculpture in the earlier Christian ages was hardly known. The people feared the graven image, for it savored of idolatry; and that art, being dependent upon form, was almost abandoned. Such as was produced favored the antique model, but always failed in technical skill. Painting, again, though wholly religious, was an art looked upon with suspicion and often denounced. As in architecture, the new thought could not find its complementary form at first, and so, partly through inability to embody conceptions and partly through fear of idolatry, symbolism arose. This gave the first original expression to Christian ideas; and though afterwards anathematized by church councils, it was favored by the clergy as a teacher and received by the people as an inspiration. This symbolism was at first shown in letters and afterward in figures. "The cross was used as a token of sacrificial death and redemption; the palm, as the symbol of eternal peace; the peacock, as the sign of immortality; the lamb, the

vine, the ship, all bearing [bore] distinct reference to well-known biblical passages." \* But it was not long before painting began to deal with forms in direct representation, and during the fifth century scriptural scenes became the subjects. Again the councils anathematized, but of little avail. The images multiplied in number and became intensified in emotional and spiritual power, but continued to fall off in technical rendering. Indeed, technically, early Christian painting is bad throughout and little better than the picture-histories of the Egyptian temples. It was kept subordinate to architecture, and though dealing with form in a different manner from Roman painting, it could not avoid showing the influence of the latter in its beginnings. Its object was never to display beauty of form, but ideas, emotions, passions. To show through the face the workings of the tortured mind and the ecstatic soul, to stir the beholder by the story that it told, was the new mission of painting. Mosaics of Christ, the Madonna, and the Evangelists, accompanied by such symbols as the angel, eagle, bull, and lion, came in during the fifth century, and as we near the tenth century the influence of Byzantine or Eastern art began to make itself strongly felt. This latter was hard and lifeless, and about its only attraction lay in the richness of its materials.

The whole period of Christian art down to the tenth century was but one of preparation and education for the future. Its history shows two features vitally

---

\* Lübke, *History of Art.*

important to us in examining the succeeding periods. The first is the transition from the Greek beauty of form to the Christian idea, as an art-aim. This latter influenced, if it did not control, the whole tendency of art from the fall of Rome to the seventeenth century, and must not be lost sight of for a moment. The second feature is the education of the masses by means of art, which brought about a love for it. People affect what they know the most about, and it was the art-teaching of the early Church that first formed and gave the impetus to the pictorial mind of Italy. It was that beginning in the common sympathies of the race, that knowledge of art among the people, which afterward appeared as the fine taste of the Renaissance. We have, then, in these two features the motive and the inclination; let us follow farther the development.

In the ancient world nations expanded separately, by their own strength and in their own manner. Rome strove to crush out all race-peculiarities and establish a universal empire. The Christian civilization, through its religion, gave a common aim to the peoples of Europe, and while holding them together by the bond of faith, left them civilly free to develop as they chose. Thus from the ninth century the races of the West were divided into separate nations, yet the Church was acknowledged as the head of all. The Papacy rose to great power under the ambitious Hildebrand, but disputes arose between the emperors and the popes, and their quarrels long agitated Europe and kept mediæval life at fever-heat. The

Church, at first triumphant, gathered about it colonies of the people, and produced a community of interest in things temporal as well as spiritual. Shortly afterward the Lombard free cities arose and strife sprang up between them, succeeded by the bitterer wars of the Guelfs and Ghibellines, of Frederick Barbarossa, and of Frederick II. Throughout the entire Romanesque and Gothic Periods (1000-1400) Italy was torn and devastated by political wars, though the free cities through their leagues of protection and their commerce were prosperous.

Generally speaking, the times were out of joint and the people were flighty, ignorant, superstitious, ill-balanced. The leading features of life were accepted with extravagance. The human mind seemed given over to wild longings after the impossible and the unattainable, which produced only dissatisfaction and uncertainty. Bad government, wars, famines, insecurity, had a weakening effect, and the strong strain of religious enthusiasm made the fanatic and the monomaniac. The emotional character of the people, inherited from the preceding generations, and heightened by the storm and stress of mediæval life, began to appear now stronger than ever. Delusions and superstitions, impositions and absurdities were nourished, and excesses of every nature broke forth. Some thought the year one thousand was to be the end of the world, and in fear and trembling they awaited the millennium. It came not, and their hysteria found vent in another direction. Mariolatry, chivalry, and the worship of woman came in,

with all their sentimentality. The lover became an idolater, fanatical enough to risk any danger or commit any folly to please the object of his love, and the chivalric knight spent years in wandering about the country doing deeds of valor in a fair lady's name. Then followed the Crusades; and though these latter emanated not directly from Italy; yet they visibly affected it. The extremes of passion met and counteracted each other. In the midst of battle and his hatred of the infidel, the crusader made his vows to the lady of his love. The amorous warrior and the ecstatic monk moved side by side. Later on came the religious fanatics, the penitents and pilgrims; following them came the flagellants, roaming through the streets by thousands, whipping themselves and calling upon an offended God for mercy; and still later the sentimentalists established the Courts of Love.

Yet, in spite of this fanaticism and extravagance, the people grew in intelligence and power. The Papacy, triumphant, became arrogant and corrupt; and gradually the people, viewing its pretensions with alarm, grew colder toward it. The worship of God was not less; but the pope, "His vicegerent upon earth," was looked upon with suspicion. Chivalry, the Crusades, the free cities, the growth of commercial life, drew people away from monastic sway, and the wars between the emperors and the popes split the land into factions. The hold of the Papacy upon the people slackened somewhat. Men gradually roused from their religious morbidity to view the

surrounding world and find something worth living for in it. Life began anew with an inclination toward nature, and at the end of the Gothic period this became more pronounced and universal. People had lived for a thousand years in intellectual darkness; now they followed their natural instincts and again sought the light. Religion still bound the nations together, and its sentiment was in no degree impaired; if anything, it was more enthusiastic;\* but man was freeing himself from dogma and tradition. He was still humble before the church, but not abjectly so. On the contrary, he became more assertive and manly, because grown stronger in comprehension. In addition, worldly prosperity was with him. The laws were amended and many abuses corrected; governments became more stable; banking and commercial houses were established, and the sciences began to flourish. In its geographical position Italy was well situated to be the highway of trade between the East and the West. All the countries bordering upon the Mediterranean contributed to its wealth. It was to the western world what Phœnicia was to Egypt. The Crusades stimulated traffic and roused energy in numerous branches. Commerce flourished at Pisa, Genoa, Venice, and Florence, and made possible many industries. A trade in spices, mirrors, silks, jewels sprung up, and manufactories of glass and woolen goods were established on Italian soil.

---

\* Waltman and Woerman, *History of Ancient, Early Christian and Mediæval Painting*.

The intellectual mind began to stir about the beginning of the twelfth century, and its result was the establishment of universities, the study of languages, the multiplication of manuscripts, and the investigation of Roman law.\* The papacy at one time advocated education. Gregory VII. in the eleventh century commanded every bishop to open a school in connection with his cathedral, and he further encouraged the copying and collecting of manuscripts. But Gregory's successors thought that learning tended toward heresy, and they speedily changed ground to oppose it. The influence in Italy of the first premonitors of the Renaissance, Abélard, Joachim of Flora, and Roger Bacon, with their predecessors, Erigena, Roscelin, and William of Champeaux, was stamped out; but the spirit of learning continued to rise. A moral pressure came upon Italy and the Papacy from the North; and the Moors of Spain, who were high in Arabian culture when the rest of Europe was in darkness, brought an intellectual pressure to bear through France. The sciences were taken up. A knowledge of mathematics and geography was obtained from translations of Euclid and Ptolemy, and astronomy was introduced from Arabia. Alchemy and medicine flourished under Aquinas, Cecco d'Ascoli, Mundinus, and others. A small classical revival took place in the eleventh century, when Cicero, Quintillian, Sallust, Horace, and Virgil began to be read, though "the first real restorer of polite learning

---

\* Hallam, *Introduction to the Literature of Europe*, vol. i.

was Petrarch." \* The Latin died out as a language of the people, and was superseded by dialects, though it still remained the medium of the learned. Scholastic jurists like Accursius, Bartolus, and Baldus revived the study of Roman law. Universities sprung into existence in the principal European cities. The schools of Oxford, Paris, and Bologna became known and established as universities in the twelfth century; Piacenza founded one in the thirteenth; and during the next century different ones were established at Rome, Perugia, Pisa, Florence, Sienna, Arezzo, Lucca, and Pavia. Philosophy in its first stage (that is, to the twelfth century) was subordinate to theology, having for its teachers Alcuin and Anselm. The second stage was its combination with religion. Scholastic philosophy had its fountain-head with Roscelin, Abélard, and Aquinas at Paris, to which place most of the scholars of Europe at that time repaired. The teachings of the schoolmen brought about the third stage, or the separation of philosophy and religion. Heresies broke out anew, and the church now put forth all its energies to check them and the progress of philosophy by the establishment of the Inquisition; but it was too late. Dogmatic theology in the schools of the church rose to great power in the fourteenth century, and free philosophical thought, in the latter part of the Gothic period, received support from the revival of Greek learning. Greek literature had been

---

\* Hallam.

studied as far back as the tenth century, but its restoration was not properly begun until the middle of the fourteenth century. Boccaccio was "the first Grecian of the modern world,"\* though his predilection for classical studies was animated by his friend Petrarch. He was succeeded by Giovanni da Ravenna, Chrysoloras, and Poggio, the rescuer of manuscripts, who have been recognized as the revivers of learning in Italy.

The Romanesque-Gothic Period was but the multiplied inheritance of the early Christian ages, and all the overwrought sentiment of the age found its perfect record in the arts. Mirror-like they reflected each popular impulse and each stage of progress. The time was not unfavorable to them. On the contrary, the arts often flourish best in seasons of commotion, friction, wrong, and oppression. People feel more intensely, think deeper, and act stronger at such times. In Italy this period was the one in which the arts began to rise. The advance in poetry was later with her than with her neighbors; for while France was listening to the love-songs of the troubadours, and Germany was engaged by its myth-making minnesingers, Italy was clinging unconsciously to its classic traditions. But the foreign poetry had its influence, and became known to the Italians through adoption; and afterward it was the revamped and restored tales of Charlemagne and Roland that pro-

---

\* Symonds, *Renaissance in Italy: Italian Literature*.

duced the *Morgante* and the two *Orlandos*.\* The Provençal, the Franco-Italian, and the Sicilian poetry first appeared, and then, almost at the same time (the thirteenth century), the dialects of the different parts of Italy gave expression in various forms of prose and verse.† Guido Guinicelli, whom Dante called his father in poetry, made poetry more national in spirit and elevated in style by writing in Tuscan. The subject of all the verse was love, but Guido treated the theme with novelty, and started a school of transcendental singers uttering the philosophy and metaphysics of love. Around him were many minor poets,—Onesto, Fabrizio, Ghislieri,—and their poetry formed the link between the Sicilian and the native Tuscan;‡ yet aside from its being reflective of the time it calls for no special mention here. The first great voice to utter the sentiments of the age was that of Dante (1265-1321). The popular mind, fed on priestly superstitions, glowing fancies of happiness, and imaginary horrors, was well fitted to receive his poetry. He not only represented the doctrines and teachings of the ecclesiastics, but the sentiments of the people. He etherealized and heightened the conceptions of the troubadours, and in embodying the faith of Christianity he gave to the world its greatest religious poem. Petrarch held an intermediate position between Dante and Boccaccio. Much of his poetry shows his classical taste and

---

\* Symonds, *Renaissance in Italy: Italian Literature*.

† *Ibid.*

‡ *Ibid.*

study, while much of it, again, shows his tendency toward the purely human and the real. It was reserved, however, for Boccaccio, who may be called a prose-poet, to fully represent the material side of life. In many things the Italians were realistic by nature, and Boccaccio had his forerunners in Folgore and the obscene writers of the thirteenth century. He was a writer of the people and of things as they were—a writer of the natural and the sensual; and in this he but supplied a then existing demand. He, like his predecessors, obeyed an impulse of his day—a tendency toward naturalism. Diametrically opposite to each other, Boccaccio anatomized life with a not too gentle scalpel, Dante exalted it to the spiritual world. Dante's greatest work was *The Divine Comedy*; Boccaccio's, *The Human Comedy*, as the *Decameron* has, not inappropriately, been called. And between them was Petrarch with his classical taste. We shall presently see that the popular sympathies which these three individually expressed were brought together and united in the art of the Renaissance.

Early Christian art exhausted itself before the Teutonic mind was sufficiently developed to fill its place with a something better; and when civilization began to move onward again, architecture was still the leader, and painting and sculpture its subordinates. The Roman was the model of the Romanesque architecture, which after undergoing many developments became a distinct style. Its main import was religious, and in Italy, particularly, it was long bounded by ecclesiastical tradition. The Transition Style was caused

by a love for richer features and the embellishment of worship. It is best seen in Germany; and the leaning of the people toward nature is seen in much of its ornamentation. The incoming of the Gothic was an evolution in building. Though different from the Romanesque, it was not an original growth but rather a development of the former model brought about by a change in the popular disposition. The pointed arch came back from the East with the Crusaders, and the first complete example of the Gothic appeared in the church of St. Denis near Paris in 1144.\* Architecture had somewhat passed into the hands of the laity by this time; the clergy were losing ground; and the people were rising, especially in France. Their freer spirit was exhibited in the Gothic tracery and ornamentation, and the new forms were in some measure a protest and an opposition to the conventionalism of the antique and the ecclesiastical. More than ever this style embodied and symbolized Christianity. It opposed the architecture of the ancients, not alone in its aspiring perpendicular lines of airy lightness as contrasted with the horizontal massiveness of the Greeks, but in its reassertion of the Christian idea. The Gothic, as Lübbe has well observed, represented the "ethical artistic ideal;" and though it afterward attained a beauty of form founded on romantic nature, yet this was not its inceptive purpose. It sprung to perfection almost immediately in France, while Germany, content with the richer Romanesque, did

---

\* Viollet-le-Duc, *Discourses on Architecture*.

not receive it until later. It found its way into Italy last of all because of the classical bias that prevailed there. It never reached its purest forms south of the Alps, for which perhaps we need be thankful, since it resulted in fewer windows, more wall-space, and a greater number of pictures.

Sculpture in Italy during the early Romanesque period was but a repetition of the old types. Monastic life and church restrictions limited its field of action to the teaching of the people by its symbolism, and the art degenerated. At the north, where the people were freer from conventions and more susceptible to ideas, it was much better. Yet at best the art-forms were determined by tradition, and were stiff and hard until the age of chivalry came in, when the figures became slight, affected, and sentimental to correspond. Painting in France and Germany at this time was confined to ornamentation, miniatures, and painting on glass, and in Italy it ran into mosaics and symbolism, of which enough has been said. It was not until the time of Nicolo Pisano (1205-1278?) that either painting or sculpture advanced greatly. Nicolo was a phenomenal renaissance in himself, and his work in sculpture was the immediate cause of progress in painting. He was a believer in the classic, and drew the attention of a people overburdened with sentiment to the importance of form in art. To the Gothicists with Christian thought, who came after him, he gave pagan form, and his influence can hardly be overestimated. The artists grew more observing of na-

ture, and though unable to master the human figure, yet the head swayed, the body moved, and there was some rhythm. The expression of emotion still prevailed at the expense of strength, and the form was often hard and conventional; yet there was visible improvement. Giovanno, son of Nicolo, took up the model of his father and strove to amalgamate it with the Teutonic, and after him for a space the interest in sculpture gave way to that of painting.

Cimabue, who has been called the father of Italian painting, now came to the front, infusing life into the Byzantine type by picturing natural effects. Duccio, a contemporary, pursued the same methods with similar results. The next painter of consequence was Giotto, the pupil of Cimabue, who gave to art a vitality by a new conception. He was not wholly free from archaism, but his forms were dramatic and comparatively strong, and his ideas were expressive of nobility. He advanced painting greatly, and left not unworthy successors in Taddeo and Angelo Gaddi and Orcagna. Contemporary with Giotto was Simone Martini of the Siennese school, who adopted a model with a distinct cast of features and a rounder, fuller figure, which he posed in devotional attitudes. Ambrogio Lorenzetti and his brother Pietro succeeded, and after that the Siennese school declined into hardness and overstrained sentimentality. The schools of Central Italy, Bologna, and Modena adhered to the archaic type, and at Padua and Verona, though the schools were active and showed an inclination toward nature, yet they were

hampered by the same conventions as the others. Fra Angelico belongs to this period, though living far into the fifteenth century.

The general aim of painting during the Gothic Period was to picture the same sentiments as those set forth in the lauds and sacred hymns, which appeared in great numbers at that time. Feeling and tenderness were the chief features striven after. It was primarily an emotional art with a leaning toward nature. It afterward degenerated into excessive sentiment, and nothing but a vibration to the other extreme could bring in the naturalism of the fifteenth century.

## CHAPTER IV.

### ART EMOTIONAL, INTELLECTUAL, AND INDIVIDUAL *(continued).*

THE RENAISSANCE.—The period of history known as The Renaissance recalls the Arabic story of the Genie pent up in the bottle, who when at last loosed from confinement expanded into a cloud-like figure of enormous proportions. It was thus that the Genius of Knowledge, starting in small beginnings, developed in size until its shadow overspread the whole civilized world. The Renaissance was a growth, a transition; not a revolution or a reaction. The influence of the preceding period was felt upon it, and the religion, the sentiment, the fanaticism, the violence of the Mediæval age of faith were the seeds from which sprung the knowledge and power of the Renaissance age of reason. It assimilated the knowledge of the past, and reproduced it with the added thought of the present. In other words, it was but the Gothic Period in maturity. Three leading factors brought about this advanced civilization, viz.: the inherited Christian education of the preceding centuries; the restoration of the antique; and the study of nature. In art the unity of these factors formed the crowning glory of the Golden Age. But

before we speak of it let us briefly examine the inclinations of the people and the expanding knowledge of the time.

It will be remembered that previous to the beginning of the fifteenth century, life was distracted by political wars and intrigues on the part of the rulers, and by shaken opinions and unsatisfied longings on the part of the people. At the beginning of the Renaissance the situation was not much better. About the year 1300 commenced the reign of the Despots, of whom the best that can be said is that they generally encouraged learning and the arts. The removal of the Papacy to Avignon in 1309 was a loss of papal power in Italy, only restored by the return of Nicholas V. to Rome in 1447. In the intermediate period, quarrels between the Church and the cities and among the Despots themselves went on uninterruptedly, until at last court intrigue and diplomacy did away to a great extent with force of arms, and comparative peace followed. From 1450 to 1494 there was little of war; and the people, weary of fighting, turned to culture and learning. Yet petty quarrels and revolts kept up, and the whole period of the Renaissance is filled with crime and corruption, ecclesiasticism and æstheticism. A stranger mixture in mankind of the divine and human, the god-like and the brute, cannot be found in the annals of history. Religion still held the people; the pope was the vicegerent of God; faith did not die out as historians are continually informing us that it did. There never was a Reformation in Italy. Yet the people and their

rulers were at odds with the Papacy. They opposed its immorality, and at times grew skeptical of its divine authority; but they never openly revolted or left the Church. After the fourteenth century the Italian became still more assertive and aspiring, still more immoral and licentious. External life became brilliant; wealth poured in upon the cities; money was used lavishly to promote the pleasure of the people and thereby the popularity of the despots; and social intercourse reveled in splendor. Court festivals, processions, fêtes and banquets materialized mankind; and the grossest license, the most flagrant vices, the most pagan ideas, flourished: yet when the Benvenuto Cellinis came to Rome, they required the absolution of the Church. Immorality and religious belief did not seem to be incompatible with one another even in the Papacy itself. But the moral pressure from without and the intellectual pressure from within were bearing strongly upon the corruptions in the Church. The Savonarolas were thundering against them, and the Papacy was losing ground; yet its thousand years of almost absolute power was not to be overthrown in a day. The rising of the Turkish power in the East averted public attention for a time and postponed the Reformation; and when at last it came, the great work of the Renaissance had been accomplished—accomplished under the Papacy and under the shadow of ecclesiastical Christianity.

Italy had never been a united nation. The cities were independent, fighting their own battles and going their own ways, irrespective of each other. A

unity like that of the Greek states was unknown. This was not a bad condition of affairs for the development of knowledge. Turbulence of the times, as we have before noted, often favors advancement; and now the arts and sciences all flourished. Yet the land possessed no national strength; and when the year 1494 began the period of foreign invasions under Charles VIII., Italy fell an easy prey. Liberty was lost; yet this at first did not seem to affect the people much. With an Arabic "kismet" on their lips they turned to study and intellectual development, and knowledge continued to advance. The Golden Age now began in spite of liberty lost, and after 1494 the greatest men of the Renaissance appear. This may be explained by the fact that the most of them were born and educated before the invasions; and then, too, Italy was destined to be a second Pergamus. So great was the propelling force of the Renaissance that progress stopped not abruptly. Yet, devoid of unity and liberty, the country could not long flourish. The Reformation came in the North; decline set in; from 1530, onward, Italy had no political existence of its own; and with the dawning of the seventeenth century the great wave of learning had broken and scattered itself on the sands of Europe.

The Renaissance was not brought about solely by Christianity, nor by the revival of the antique, nor the return to nature, nor the political and social state of the country. It was no one factor alone, but the amalgamation of many elements, that produced it. Among them, the education of the people through discovery

and invention may be considered of no small importance. Michelet, speaking of these, makes two principal divisions: the discovery of the world geographically and in scientific research, and the discovery of man in body and in spirit. The advance of science was great. Botany, chemistry, and medicine were studied, and while owing something to the work of Paracelsus and Jerome Cardan, they owed much more to the celebrated anatomists Zerbi of Verona, Vesalius, Fallopius, Eustachius, Arantius, Coiter; to the surgeon Varolius; and to the physiologists and botanists Cæsalpin and Prosper Alpinus. The tendency toward nature aroused the spirit of inquiry in all departments. Zoölogy and botany developed in the works of Gesner and Belon. Geography became better understood and appreciated. Mathematics, stimulated by the study of Euclid, flourished under Scipio Ferreo, Tartaglia, and Rheticus. Cosmic ideas rested upon a more scientific basis. Actual demonstration took the place of vague speculation. Astronomical discovery predicated the sun and not the earth as the center of our planetary system, and the theory of Copernicus was established. Magellan's voyage around the world in 1520 was a practical proof of the earth's rotundity. Later on came Bruno, declaring the stars to be suns and centers of systems; and lastly, in the time of decay, came Galileo, whose name alone is sufficient to recall his many discoveries in natural philosophy, astronomy, and mathematics.

Nor was discovery confined to science. Not alone the starry heavens above them and the outstretched

earth about them, but even the waters of the distant oceans became the object of people's attention. Those of a more practical turn put out to sea in ships. Navigation was at its height. The Azores were discovered in 1448; America in 1492; the Antilles in 1493; Vasco da Gama in 1497 sailed to India around the Cape of Good Hope; and twenty-three years later Magellan circumnavigated the globe. The magnet, the compass, the telescope, the making of paper, the application of gunpowder—the list of inventions that came in during the Renaissance might be stretched out indefinitely. One of them, particularly, was of very great importance. Printing was invented about 1450, and in 1455 the first Bible, now known as the Mazarin Bible, was printed. The new invention sprung, Minerva-like, to perfection at its birth, and its influence as a factor in civilization can scarcely be exaggerated or comprehended. It was a sure and speedy means of transmitting knowledge. Within thirty years from its invention ten thousand books had been printed, and the knowledge stored up in libraries and monasteries was given to all mankind. The pulpit wavered before it, and oratory sank beneath it. Books became comparatively cheap, and soon that mirror of the times, the newspaper, came into vogue at Venice. Engraving on wood and metal followed printing as a natural consequence.

A leading factor in the Renaissance movement was the revival of learning and the spread of the knowledge of the antique. The beginning of it has been noted in a former chapter. From Petrarch it ad-

vanced steadily, gaining in volume until all the learned men of the period applied themselves to acquisition. Even the priests grew better informed, though hating the Greek and holding fast to the Latin. The Despots (especially the Medici), the scholars, the philosophers, painters, sculptors, architects, poets, were avowed students of the humanities, and all favored the restoration. The whole intelligence and power of the age seemed brought to bear upon it. It was in vain that some of the popes regarded it with jealousy and often with open opposition; in vain that Savonarola denounced the pagan philosophy and licentiousness of the classics. The movement went onward and upward until at last it reached that height where it could not sustain itself—that climacteric height to which all great movements have attained only to fall.

The Humanism of the Renaissance has been divided into four periods;\* the First being the awakening with Petrarch, Boccaccio, and Chrysoloras, and the dawning of a new light that should dispel mediæval superstition and ignorance. "This was the age of inspiration and discovery." Slowly men awakened to the importance of Greek learning, then turned to study it, and at last grew to worship it. They saw wisdom in its philosophy, truth in its science, and beauty in its art. The comparison between the antique and their own civilization was odious. Enthusiasm spurred men on to study, and a reverence for the relics of

---

\* Symonds, *Renaissance in Italy: Revival of Learning*.

antiquity, amounting to sentimentality, grew with the advancing knowledge. Petrarch, Boccaccio, Poggio, began the collecting of manuscripts, and among scholars and princes this soon developed into a passion. Almost all the Latin and Greek classics were saved from destruction at this time, and the translation of them, the formation of libraries, the establishment of universities, began in earnest.

The Second Period includes the patrons of learning, at whose courts assembled the first scholars of the age. Florence was then the chief center of humanism. Palla Strozzi, the Albizzi, the Medici, all were there, and, though political enemies, they were generous rivals in the patronage of scholarship. Palla sent to Greece for manuscripts, taught the language, employed many copyists and translators, and was the founder of the first public library in Italy. Cosimo gathered about him a great coterie of learned men, and lavished money extravagantly upon fine buildings, paintings, sculpture, gems, coins, inscriptions, manuscripts. While in exile he built the library of San Giorgio Maggiore at Venice, and afterward established others at Florence, and among them the Laurentian collection.\* He also founded the Platonic Academy, had Marcilio Facino educated to expound Platonism, and on his death-bed was consoled by Facino with the philosophy of Plato. Niccolo di Niccoli emulated Cosimo, made collections, and became the founder of the Marcian collection. Bruni the Latinist, Manetti

---

\* Symonds.

the student and orator, Filelfo and Aurispa the collectors of manuscripts at Constantinople, all flourished. In 1440 the Greek was taught in five cities.\* Then came the conquest of Constantinople and Greece by the Turks, and the influx of scholars into Italy. Gemistos, Argyropoulus, Trapezuntius, the great revivers of Hellenism after Chrysoloras,† came and taught the Greek at Florence, and at the same time printing was invented and lent its most potent influence to help on the movement. Nicholas V. at Rome, a humanist himself, gave protection to the scholars; he had the Greek poets, historians, fathers, and philosophers (including Aristotle) translated into Latin, and at his death the Vatican library was a collection of five thousand manuscripts. Lorenzo Valla, the critic and satirist; Poggio, with Valla, an imitator of Cicero, Seneca, and Livy; and Cardinal Bessarion, the collector, defender of Plato, and protector of the Greek refugees—were all at the papal court. Everywhere throughout Italy the revival had begun and been carried on; and yet the period produced nothing of any consequence in original thought. It was an age of acquisition; men's heads were crammed with indiscriminate erudition; criticism was low, and little judgment was used in the accumulation. The productions, such as they were, but imitated the antique; they lacked originality, and the thought of the people was not apparent in them.

---

\* Hallam.

† Symonds.

Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio were almost abandoned, and the classic reigned quite supreme.

The Third Period of humanism is the age of Lorenzo de Medici, and Florence is still the center of learning. The Academies, or circles of the learned, were now formed, and Lorenzo gathered about him the most brilliant coterie of humanists and geniuses ever known in Italy. Facino the Platonist was still at the Medicanean court, discussing, teaching, and believing Platonism ; Poliziano, a born poet, writing in Latin, Greek, and Italian with perfect style, was beside him ; the brilliant John Pico, Count of Mirandola, was another one of the circle ; and if we would make the group complete we must add Alberti, the prototype of Leonardo da Vinci in versatility, Landino the Latinist, Pulci the poet, and, lastly, Michael Angelo the artist. It is quite impossible to give the names of the many distinguished humanists of this period, or even to catalogue the absurd Latin titles of the numerous Academies that flourished everywhere throughout Italy. The passion for the accumulation of knowledge lost none of its fury, yet the power of reproduction among the erudite was still lacking. What was produced was, when not broadly imitative, pedantic and often ridiculous. Affectation came in, and toward the latter end of this period humanism began to wane. The antique never struck a responsive chord in the hearts of the people. It was an affectation in itself which, though beneficial as an educational means, never could exist as a popular end. People began to weary of it, and a rival arose

in the shape of the Italian language. Lorenzo and Poliziano at Florence, Boiardo at Ferrara, and Sanzaro at Naples began the new revival, which met with encouragement at once because appealing to the masses. Another movement toward nature was soon to make itself manifest. Yet it must not be thought that the antique passed away. It lived and underwent the refining process of comparative criticism. The accumulation of the former period was purified and brought to its proper appreciation, while beauty of style now became a strong feature in production.

The Fourth Period is the age of Leo X. and the decline of learning. The Revival had been accomplished before the beginning of the sixteenth century,\* and what followed was the sunset of humanism and the fading brilliancy of the Renaissance. The center of learning was now at Rome under Leo. The pope himself, a lover of letters and art, lent every encouragement to the scholars, the artists, and the littérateurs of the age. Like his predecessor, Nicholas, he made vast collections of antiquities, began the excavation of ancient Rome, and founded the Museum of the Vatican. Bembo was to Leo what Poliziano was to Lorenzo, the leading humanist of the day. He and Sadoletto were the pope's secretaries, and nobly represented the age of purism and critical learning. Yet, again, the scholarly men of this period produced little besides histories, dictionaries,

---

\* Symonds.

grammars, and critical dissertations. The printing-press turned these out by the hundreds, the universities taught them, and the students tried to absorb them. But the ability to produce anything great, aside from criticism, was lacking. Spontaneity was trammelled by academic styles, and Bembo at his best was weighed down with mannerisms and affectations. The style of saying argued more than the thing said. The power of humanism began to fail; the diffusion of knowledge to the many sapped the influence of the few; and naturalism came to the fore. The native Italian literature under Ariosto, Castiglione, Machiavelli, Guicciardini, and Berni eventually superseded the antique, and the philosophy of Plato gave way to the realistic tendency of the time. Aristotle advanced, and, as in his own land so in Italy, his coming marked the decline of all things. With the sack of Rome in 1527 the period of learning ended abruptly in violence and bloodshed, and the Inquisition with the Jesuits came upon the scene.\*

Though the revival of learning resulted in little original literature, and in fact for a time throttled the popular impulse, yet its importance must not be lightly cast aside. As an intellectual training of the people its influence was great even beyond estimation. It was a school which developed the youthful mind of Italy, and its teachings are reflected in the greatest works of all the fine arts. Taste, judgment, discrimination, were the chief features developed by it.

---

\* Symonds.

Little was produced that did not show the leavening of the classic ; yet be it remembered that it was but a leavening, an ingredient and not a motive productive of spontaneous art by its own strength. Two other factors, Christianity and naturalism, share in the honor of bringing forth the Renaissance arts ; and as we examine poetry, architecture, sculpture, and painting, we shall see these three factors and their influence, either separately, in couples, or in complete unity, in the masterpieces of the different periods. Art—like the Renaissance itself—was reflective, shifting with the light, and in each stage of progress mirrored its varied surroundings.

In poetry a strife sprung up in the time of the early Renaissance between the naturalists and the classicists, the one set wishing the expression of emotions in the language of the people, and the other wishing a return to the antique. The excellence of classic models then extant won the day, and from the time of Boccaccio to that of Lorenzo there was little native poetry. Lorenzo, and after him Poliziano, compromised the matter by producing Italian poetry in classic form, and classic poetry of Italian spirit. Boiardo, producing the *Orlando Innamorato*, went back for his theme to the mediæval romances, and in style favored the classic. Pulci, his contemporary, in the *Morgante*, though more realistic, satirical, and humorous than Boiardo, still shows the effect of the antique. Sannazaro, the discoverer of the modern Arcadia, at first sought the romantic in the classic, and at last went over to the Latin almost entirely. The next great

poet belonging to a later period was Ariosto, who has been called the painter-poet, and who is more truly representative of the Renaissance than any other, save Tasso. He brought to perfection in classic form the romantic theme of Boiardo, and in the *Orlando Furioso* the two elements of naturalism and classicism mingle in perfect unison. There is no other poet worthy of mention in his immediate day, save possibly Trissino, who imitated Homer in the epic.\* In the last period of humanism a number of lyrists and imitators of Petrarch came to the surface, and among them Bembo, Molza, Guidiccione, and Castiglione. Then followed the minor sonneteers Alemanni, Vittoria Colonna, Michael Angelo; and finally the impudence of Pietro Aretino succeeded in usurping the literary dictatorship and turning the current of poetry into buffoonery and burlesque. With the decay of liberty and the decline of learning, poetry sadly degenerated into strivings after effect, producing only the grotesque. Tasso, "the legitimate heir of Dante," living far into the period of decay, combined in the *Jerusalem Delivered* all the impulses of the Renaissance. His thought was Christian, and his form and expression a blending of the antique and the natural. In him the chivalric and the ecclesiastical, the Hellenic and the Italian, are all bound up together. He was to the Renaissance what Dante was to the Gothic age—a complete mirror of the time.

Architecture, the most susceptible of all the arts to

---

\* Hallam.

the influence of the antique, because of the existing Roman models, turned back upon its course early in the fifteenth century. The Gothic had never been thoroughly at home in Italy, and the return from it to the classic was not hard to accomplish. It but followed the tendency of letters ; yet the change was not suddenly brought about, and the first period was one of experiment. Brunelleschi was the father of the new style, called the Renaissance, which had its origin at Florence. At first it was a blending of the antique and mediæval forms,\* with a leaning toward early ornament and decoration. Alberti and Pietro Lombardo, with Brunelleschi, are the representative architects of the early transition. The Second Period came in with Bramante, and dates from 1500 to 1580. The features of the improved style were the greater use of antique forms, less decoration, and more simplicity with refinement of taste and nobleness of design. The faults of the former model were now corrected, and with purity and simplicity the aim was to attain a unity of all the parts. The best buildings of the Renaissance were constructed during this period, and among the architects besides Bramante were Giulio Romano, Michael Angelo, and Jacopo Sansovino at Venice. But Michael Angelo set a bad example in architecture by disregarding the limits of the art and allowing his own individuality and genius too much rein. He himself succeeded, but the influence upon his followers was pernicious and brought about

---

\* Lübke, *Geschichte der Architektur*.

the *bizarre* style of the Third Period, in which caprice, over-decoration, and exaggeration ran riot. When power and thought in art are exhausted, the age gives place to affectation. Imitators sprung up and strove to produce Michael Angelo's effects by trickery and forced processes. Decline set in, and architecture shared a fate similar to that of poetry.

The sculpture of the early fifteenth century was influenced by the prevailing tendency toward nature, and also by painting, much of the work being pictorial in design rather than statuesque. Donatello's marbles are good instances of the former influence, and Ghiberti's Gates of the Baptistery at Florence of the latter. Most of the sculptors of this period have been indiscriminately called "realists," but the term is misleading. To be a realist requires objective imitation; and where individuality is so apparent as it is in the work of Donatello, pure realism cannot exist. Jacopo della Quercia, Ghiberti, Donatello, Verrocchio, show the movement toward nature, and undoubtedly they modeled the human figure precisely as they saw it; but they were not imitators, nor could they, by any liberal adherence to the model, erase their own conceptions. Donatello was the leader of them all, and in many respects he was not unlike Michael Angelo. He had the same fiery nature, worked in a like impetuous manner, cast aside all teachings and conventions, and followed the bent of his own genius in the same arbitrary way. But he had not the great genius of Michael Angelo, and never soared so high. At first he began with the antique, but soon abandoned it for

the bald and even the harsh expression of passionate realities.\* His scorn of the effeminate, and at times almost of the beautiful, is remarkable; and his love of nature, even to portraiture in his marbles, is quite apparent. Yet his passionate power in execution amply compensates for what he may have lost by pursuing nature to the far extreme. Verrocchio, following his methods, was his principal pupil; and at the same time lived Lucca della Robbia, partaking somewhat of the tendency toward nature, yet showing more sympathy, sentiment, and tender beauty than any of the others.

In the early sixteenth century, nature and the revived antique blended with Christian thought, and for a brief period sculpture stood upon a great height.† Leonardo da Vinci as a sculptor belongs to this period, but unfortunately there is nothing left of his work. Rustici, his fellow-pupil under Verrocchio, caught not a little of Leonardo's spirit,‡ and there is much of the sixteenth-century freedom of form in his art. The next great master is Andrea Sansavino, whom Lübke likens in sculpture to Raphael in painting. His imaginative and creative powers were great, and he had much feeling for beauty, producing some masterpieces of purity and nobility. Jacopo Sansovino, the pupil of the former, though possessing talent, ran too far to the classic and fell into mannerisms. Form over-refined gradually took the place of thought, and sculpture went back to imitate the Torso

\* Lübke, *History of Sculpture*.

† *Ibid.*

‡ *Ibid.*

and the Laokoön. Michael Angelo as architect, sculptor, and painter stands alone. He can be coupled with no artist or school of artists, for of all men he was independent. In sculpture he retained the Christian thought of Dante, while about him literature was sinking into insipidities of style, and his contemporaries were producing marbles baldly imitative of the antique, and neither Greek nor Christian. During his long life he reflected all the different influences of the age. At first devoted to nature, then classic, and lastly intellectual and individual, he combined in himself all the strength of his predecessors, and added to it the might of his own genius. The chief feature of his art was the subordination of form to the expression of his personal ideas and feelings. He was thoroughly subjective, in fact over-much so for the limits of sculpture and architecture. They are too dependent upon form for emotional individual arts, and though Michael Angelo through great genius succeeded in making sculpture wholly expressive of thought, yet he once more set a very bad example. The fate of his followers who caught up the staff of the prophet and tried to conjure in his name can easily be imagined. The rod turned into a serpent. The power which his strong will easily held in check turned to unbridled caprice with those of lesser strength. They imitated his faults, but could not grasp his virtues. Exaggerations and mannerisms sprung up. At the death of Michael Angelo there was scarcely an independent sculptor living; and from sheer exhaustion the art declined.

In speaking of painting it may be premised at the start that Crowe and Cavalcaselle, Vasari, and other historians who have builded theories of history upon the supposed fact that Christian sentiment and thought as an art-impulse were exhausted and died out before or during the Renaissance, are mistaken. Such was not the state of affairs by any means. A thousand years of Christianity firmly established in the state and with the people was not to be uprooted or cast aside by a century of revived antiquity. It never was and never has been replaced in Italy by any paganism of any kind; and though during the Renaissance skepticism, discontent, crime, and immorality were singularly prevalent, yet we have already seen that these features at that time constituted no hindrances to church-membership. Moreover they were characteristic rather of the nobility and the rulers than of the people. The teachings of Christianity still lived strongly. They were losing ground before all the corruption of the time; but when they had so far decayed as to be no longer a motive in art, the Renaissance had passed and all things were in the decline of the seventeenth century.

A more positive mistake on the part of these historians is the supposition that the return to the classic or the departure toward nature were principal causes of the Renaissance painting. They were not principal but accessory causes. The study of the classic and of nature resulted in remodeling the mediæval form, which was unsatisfactory; but it pro-

duced no spontaneous or original thought of great consequence. The *art-ideas* came from Christianity refined and tempered by humanism, but the *form* in which these ideas were set forth was an amalgamation of the classic and the natural. These latter, then, vitally important be it admitted, were the means and not the end; the methods of the few, not the thoughts of the many. The only ideas emanating from all classes of any people at once have been religious in nature. Religion produced the arts of Egypt, Assyria, India, Greece; it produced the art of the Renaissance, and whatever other factors may have come into play in the production must be set down as subordinate to the main impulse. To be sure, many artists of the time began and ended with the antique and nature; but these compositions from Greek mythology or Italian life pure and simple were not the masterpieces. The great works had for their subjects the Madonna, the Sibyls, the Prophets, the Saints, the Resurrection, the Descent, and the Last Judgment. It has been said that these lingered but as traditions, and that the pagan Venus is but masquerading in the garb of the Christian Madonna, Apollo in St. Sebastian, Hercules in St. Christopher; but the observation has little force. It could as easily be said that Venus was a garbless Madonna, or Apollo an unmartyred Sebastian. What was the necessity of masquerading or making a mental mixture of the two? They were well known from each other, and painted separately by many artists. The truth is, Christian subjects were chosen because Christianity

was the theme most in accord with the sentiments of the people. The deep spirit of Dantesque religion is not more apparent in Fra Angelico than in Leonardo, Raphael, and Michael Angelo. For confirmation of this, witness St. Peter's at Rome, where art will be found religious in thought, classic in form, and natural in expression. Painting but followed the other arts in making a unity of these factors. The revival of the antique was educational in its effect ; and though some mistook it for an aim of art in itself, yet the majority used it but as a means for the better expression of Christian ideas. The impulse of the Renaissance art generally, then, was Christianity, and nature and the classic were but directing features of the movement.

The architecture of the fifteenth century was favorable to painting because the Renaissance style furnished wall-spaces in abundance and demanded for its completion the services of the painter. Painting was further favored by being somewhat less influenced by the classic than the other arts, because of the lack of antique models. With the opening of the fifteenth century the tendency was toward nature. The painters with the sculptors turned to study the human form—the nude, in its many phases—in order to overcome the technical conditions of their art. Masaccio of the Tuscan school was the pioneer of the new style in painting.\* He was a student of nature, and likewise of the marbles at Rome, the in-

---

\* Lübke.

fluence of both appearing in his work. Like every beginner in an undertaking he shows us more of the language than the spirit of art. His plastic composition, perspective, foreshortening, and picturesque color-schemes are all records of his experiments, yet not without great life and boldness, even grandeur, of execution. His subjects are in the main religious, with little of the dramatic in them. Undoubtedly he was much influenced by the study of sculpture, and possibly by Donatello;\* and on the other hand he was likewise influenced by nature, which gave to his art its remarkably vitality. Fra Filippo Lippi, a contemporary of Masaccio, leaned toward the more sensuous side of nature, and in some of his religious themes there is a want of holiness in the characters. Yet he was not without feeling. A spark of the old Byzantine tenderness is shown in the faces of his women, and there is a quiet dignity about the men altogether admirable.† In addition he was an excellent modeler, composed dramatically, and had a keen faculty for pictorial treatment and color. Botticelli was an apostle of Dante and Savonarola. His paintings with their melancholy Madonnas are poetic in the extreme, and their counterpart may be found in the romances of his time.‡ He placed himself half-way between the classic and nature, and was affected by both influences. Half-religious, half-fanciful, he formed out of many inspirations and in-

---

\* Crowe and Cavalcaselle.

† Wolzman and Woerman.

‡ Symonds.

fluences "a vehement and passionate manner of his own."\* The style of Filippino Lippi was based upon that of his father Fra Filippo. He was more classic in his tendency, and in some respects excelled both his father and Botticelli. Ghirlandajo, the master of Michael Angelo, combined in himself the art-knowledge of his time. His execution was powerful, and his handling of the human form excellent ; yet he is wearisome with many passive virtues. His work is prosaic and lacks sentiment, enthusiasm, and that genius which elevates the commonplace. Severe and dignified, never tender or brilliant, his moderation and extreme good sense made him uninteresting, paradoxical as it may sound to say so. His knowledge but formed a stepping-stone for others to rise upon.† Signorelli, his contemporary, was a much greater man. Indeed he has been justly called "the morning star" of Michael Angelo, for in his daring play with form, his dramatic and excited action, and his tragic power he anticipated the latter. He was a master of the nude, and it was his delight to handle form in masses, foreshortening, twisting, and contorting for the purposes of drawing. It was for this that he chose so many antique subjects. Yet his aims were ever high, and in striving after and partially attaining them he showed not a little of that religious poetry and thought developed afterward by Michael Angelo.‡

---

\* Crowe and Cavalcaselle.

† Symonds

‡ Wolman and Woerman.

In the schools of Upper Italy Squarcione had a most potent influence. He founded the Paduan school; and was more of a pedagogue than a painter. He was a great collector of antiques, and taught the study of the body, not from the nude, but at second hand, from Greek sculpture. The effect of this is visible in the statuesque appearance of his pupils' works. Especially is this true of his greatest pupil, Mantegna. He posed and drew the marble to the life, but it was only marble—a human being “turned to stone.” It lacked life, and even the suggestion of possible movement. His art, pure and strong, was likewise icily regular; yet in his hard, stiff figures Mantegna was not lacking in force and tragic power, and in his best works he is not devoid of feeling. These latter are of religious subjects wherein nature, which he also studied, blends with the antique. The great bulk of his work was nevertheless of the plastic stamp. Another artist influenced somewhat by both Mantegna and Squarcione was Giovanni Bellini, the founder of the Venetian school. He lacked deep thought and showed little passion; but these defects were atoned for by dignified repose in his figures, moral beauty, poetic sentiment, and beauty of color.\*

While the schools of Upper Italy were tending toward the classic, and the Tuscan school toward nature, the Umbrian school of the mystics clung to the religious sentiment of the Middle Ages. Niccolo Alunno was the founder of the latter; and after him

---

\* Lübke.

came Perugino, the first prominent leader. His works are filled with religious fervor, and the faces of his characters show only the pensive front of the forbearing saint. This sentiment is often dissipated in sheer sentimentality, and the painter always failed in strength and energetic action. Even his Spartans and Romans are as mild and harmless as his Sebastians and Bernards.\* Michael Angelo had almost as much contempt for his art as Vasari had for his personal life. The latter affirms that he was, at once, an infidel, a criminal, and a miser, sacrificing his art for gold; but Rio † denies this. However this may be, as an artist, though often insipid, he is still at times highly poetic, and his skill should not be underestimated. Among the pupils of Perugino and other followers of the Umbrian school may be mentioned Lo Spagna, Pinturicchio, and Francia. The last was very much like Perugino in his religious feeling, and excelled him in warmth of color, though not so strong in other respects.

Fra Bartolommeo, a Florentine contemporary of Michael Angelo, was a painter of the Church, and is strikingly representative of the Christian thought of his age. He was a connecting-link between the Early and the High Renaissance, showing alike the religious feeling of the Umbrians and the splendid *technique* of the Florentines. His chief success was in devotional painting, and in this he was quite unrivaled. Sympathetic rather than great, and lofty in feeling rather

---

\* Symonds.

† *Poetry of Christian Art.*

than in imagination, he charmed more by his beauty and purity, his fine drawing and splendid color, than by force or dramatic power. He was greatly influenced by Savonarola, and joined with him in decrying the sensuous antique model. When Savonarola perished at the stake, the painter-monk threw down his palette and brush, and only after four years was he induced to resume them. Afterward he became the friend of the young Raphael and taught him many accomplishments. He was never a star of the first magnitude, because lacking brilliancy; but though not the center of the Renaissance constellation, he nevertheless held a prominent place and was one of its most representative supporters. Another Florentine artist of commanding abilities who painted devotional pictures, but of a decidedly human cast, was Andrea del Sarto, called "the faultless painter." He was influenced by Leonardo, Michael Angelo, and Fra Bartolommeo, and received from them much of his inspiration. He was an excellent draughtsman, and his work always possessed dignity, force, and a charming freshness of treatment; but he was not grand in imagination. His strong features were his drawing, his flesh-tints, his exquisite chiaroscuro, and his beauty of color.\* A melancholy interest attaches to his personal history and has given rise to many speculations as to what he might have been under different influences.

Correggio was a musician who affected, not the

---

\* Lübke.

tragic chorus, but the sweet symphony of life and beauty. Like Andrea he painted religious subjects, but his Madonnas and Magdalenes are earth-born daughters of Eve and possess little holiness. In all his subjects, especially in the antique, his chief aim is to reproduce warm, palpitating beauty; to show the inner life of animal spirits; to display the charm of the purely sensuous. In thought he is scarcely noble;\* yet his intensity of feeling, his splendid flush of life, and incomparable sweetness of mood make a minor greatness in themselves. Technically he was influenced by Leonardo, yet his style is new and quite his own. He is best known by his effects of chiar-oscuro, of which he was a master. This with his color and good drawing made up much of the charm to be found in his pictures. He was a lover of nature and the representative painter of the human, as Fra Bartolommeo was of the spiritual and religious. A school was founded by him, but after his death his followers carried his methods to exaggeration.

We have at last before us (not without some disregard of dates and schools) the great trio of the Renaissance—Leonardo, Raphael, and Michael Angelo. Singularly enough, the characteristics of their art were, in each case, shown in the face and personal appearance of the artist. Leonardo was majestic, stately, splendid; Raphael, youthful, beautiful, and charming as an Olympian god; while Michael Angelo

---

\* Lübke.

had the prophet's rugged brow, and out of his eyes shone the light of commanding genius.\* In Leonardo the elements of greatness seemed to mingle. "He was one of those rare phenomena in whom nature loves to combine all conceivable human perfections; his beauty was as graceful as it was dignified; his physical strength was scarcely conceivable, and his mental gifts were of a character more versatile than is scarcely ever combined in the same person."† Rich, noble, courtly, he drew and charmed the world by his varied accomplishments. Like the English Bacon, all knowledge was his province. He excelled in painting, sculpture, music, poetry, architecture, engineering, mathematics, anatomy, chemistry, astronomy, botany, geology, optics. Physically and mentally he was a giant in his age and country. In art he studied all schools and sifted out what was best in them. He saw power in the skill of those who had gone to nature; he saw beauty of form in the relics of antiquity, and beauty of thought in the religious art which had preceded him. It was reserved for him to assimilate these excellences and reproduce them together. How well he did this even the engravings of the Last Supper, with which we are all familiar, will testify. It is seldom indeed that such a masterpiece of composition, such a wealth of passionate power yet tempered with moderation, such a characterization of human beings, have been combined in one picture. The fresco has been praised as

---

\* Symonds.

† Lübke.

the masterpiece of the ages, and even in its ruins it is not undeserving of the seeming extravagance. Unfortunately there are not many of Leonardo's works remaining. Indeed, he executed but few; he thought and experimented too much and embodied too little; but the ideas he gave vent to—many-sided as his own genius—found expression in the works of his pupils, which are valuable on that account if for no other reason. At his best Leonardo's work is remarkable for dignity of character and great depth of poetic feeling, and technically for delicacy of execution and perfect mastery of light and shade, and aërial perspective. The face of *Mona Lisa* in the Louvre will show these characteristics, and he who looks at it once will return to gaze at its beauty again and again. It would be hard to imagine anything more perfect, save the wonderful face of Christ in the *Last Supper*; yet Leonardo was not satisfied with either of them, and pronounced both incomplete. Great as was his ability to realize, his conceptions were even greater; and taking him for all in all, he was undoubtedly the equal of any painter that ever lived. His principal pupil was *Bernardo Luini*, and his influence is seen upon *Soddoma* and others of less note.

Raphael and Michael Angelo cannot be compared, for they are different. Neither can it be said with justice that Raphael was an idealist. In some of his classic subjects he attempts the Greek ideal, and fails (that is, "fails" for Raphael) through lack of spontaneity; but these are his poorer works

and do not merit consideration. His nearest approach to the classic ideal is in his harmonies of form and thought; but even here there is too much of thought, too much of the artist's individuality, to admit of pure idealism. A harmony of all beauties was undoubtedly the general aim of Raphael's art, but in his greatest works he forgot this aim and was carried away by the genius of his own conceptions. The sublimity of the Sistine Madonna consists, not in its harmony, but in its predominant idea of holiness. The "Light of the world" shines out of those Infant eyes, the serene consciousness of a divine Motherhood is on that Madonna face; and in comparison, of what consequence are the well-wrought limbs of the child, the regular features of the mother? Of what consequence the splendid modeling, the composition, the *technique*? The thought is primary; the other beauties are only secondary. No; Raphael was not an idealist, nor yet a realist, nor yet, again, a painter of passionate thought like Michael Angelo, but rather a combination of all three. He was not unlike Leonardo in that he assimilated and reproduced all the virtues of his age. "No acquisition of the art of the period was disregarded by him; everywhere he knew how to adopt freely essential merits."\* All his life he seems to have been seeking ideas in the art around him. Greek, Roman, Byzantine, contemporary art, all were the objects of his study. At first a pupil of Perugino, he caught the sentiment of

---

\* Lübke.

the Umbrian school; then, when still young, he came under the influence successively of Masaccio, Fra Bartolommeo, Leonardo, and Michael Angelo, until at last, having learned the best in the art of the greatest, he became himself, and formed his own incomparable style. As we have said, the chief aim of his art was the harmony of many beauties—beauty of form and feature, beauty of idea, beauty of expression. There were some of the Renaissance period who thought deeper than he did, others who executed better, and others, again, possessed of more feeling; but he alone, with the exception of Leonardo, combined all these qualities. His range of ideas and choice of subjects were unlimited. History, symbolism, mythology, the classics, Christianity, all came beneath his eye and found a representation; but among these he loved the religious subjects best, and it is among them that we find his masterpieces. The technical side of Raphael's art is too well known to call for comment. His influence was great, and many pupils followed in his footsteps, but they did him little credit. The first among them was Giulio Romano, who possessed strength, but of a coarse and at times sensual nature. He lacked the moderation of his master, and led the way to extravagance and mannerism. After Raphael's death many imitators strove to reproduce his harmonies, but the insipidities that followed bore witness to the dangers that attend the playing with the edged tools of genius.

And lastly, Michael Angelo. In painting, as in sculpture, he is so great that few ever equaled him,

and none ever surpassed him. The same impulse that moved him in the one art guided him in the other. Different from the cosmopolitan Leonardo and the beauty-loving Raphael, he hewed out a path to be trodden by himself alone. A man of genius in many branches of knowledge, he chose to cast aside history and trample tradition under foot. In solitary grandeur he conceived the passionate thoughts of genius, and with the power of a Titan he wrought them into action. He was most emphatically a subjective artist, and bent all things to his mood of mind. Whatever he touched bore forever after the stamp of his individuality. No artist, either past or present, has ever equaled him in this. He stands alone; and if others of his kind would see his greatness, they must look up. In his singleness of aim, in his making of a picture or a statue stand representative of one overpowering idea, lies the secret of his sublimity. The revelation of power in the Moses bears us away as upon "a mighty rushing wind." All details of form or finish or *technique* are lost sight of and forgotten. The idea is pre-eminent. This is true of his paintings in the Sistine. The spirit of Dante is in the Last Judgment, and the shadow of Savonarola falls upon the Prophets. In the presence of such power it is almost ridiculous to question about form, drawing, and color. They are but the means of accomplishment, which we do not see in viewing the splendid result. Apparently Michael Angelo never gave a thought to facts and details. He used them unconsciously as a writer uses the

letters of the alphabet. No one ever understood them better than he; no one ever had a greater command of line and form in mass: yet facts and forms were to him but materials which he changed, transmuted, even distorted, in order to produce effects. Power transformed, power concentrated, power in volume, is pre-eminently characteristic of him. In this he stands as the representative of the intellectual height of the Renaissance, and his subjectivity is that of a forerunner to the Individual Art of the nineteenth century. All causes and tendencies find their climax in his art; and though his subjects are of every kind, and his works show the profound study of nature and the antique, yet his thoughts were essentially Christian. The potency of religion is not more conspicuous in the marbles of the Parthenon than in the frescoes of the Sistine. Here, at last, is the final witness of the still-living power of Christianity as an art-impulse. Michael Angelo was one of its latest exponents, and we shall see in the next chapter that when Christianity failed to find representation in art, decline had already set in.

When the great master died, he left no successor worthy of the name, and imitators sought to produce by trickery what he had accomplished by genius. A fitting silence followed, for, with the chief actors gone, it was time that the drama of the Renaissance should end, and it was but its brilliant epilogue that followed at Venice.

It is not necessary for the purpose of characterizing the art of the Renaissance that we should follow out

its final history in the Venetian school. Moreover, the causes that gave rise to the school are somewhat different from those of the rest of Italy. Venice, geographically and to a certain extent politically and commercially, was isolated from the other cities, and was less affected by the movements of the time. Wars distracted her not; commerce flourished; her citizens and rulers grew wealthy; and when, at last, the intellectual movement reached her, its products took the form of pictorial art. In the gold and azure, the opalescence and iridescence of Venetian skies and waters, her artists conceived painting as a matter of color more than anything else, and this is the chief characteristic of their art. In other respects the tendency was toward sensuous nature. The leaders were Giorgione, Palma Vecchio, Titian, Tintoretto, and Paolo Veronese; but Titian was the master-spirit, and is generally conceded to have summed up in himself the excellences of the school.

## CHAPTER V.

### ART EMOTIONAL, INTELLECTUAL, AND INDIVIDUAL *(concluded).*

MODERN ART.—Many causes combined to precipitate the decline of the Renaissance. The lack of political unity in Italy; the foreign invasion; the Reformation at the North; the dissipation of learning and scattering of forces; corruption, skepticism, immorality,—all worked together, and in every branch special causes were mining and sapping the general strength. We need not follow the decline into its various departments; but it is necessary, in order to sustain the conclusions of the last chapter, that we should assign some of the chief causes of the falling away of painting independently of the dearth of genius.

If the principle we have maintained, that art is dependent upon the sympathy of the people, be true, then the withdrawal of that sympathy would bring about a decline. This was in reality the case after the Renaissance. Ecclesiastical authority suffered severely by the Reformation. The corruption of the Papacy, the sweeping away of abuses and superstitions, the discoveries of science, the private interpretation of the Bible, had shaken belief in the Church. Many doubted its holiness, many were indifferent to it, and the reformers openly re-

nounced it. Church allegiance, instead of being a bond scrupulously adhered to by all classes as in the Middle Ages, was now but an obligation to be entered into or not at pleasure. The strength which had previously been centered at Rome was distributed. The religious beliefs of the people were not in harmony. Different creeds arose, and the variation of opinion regarding method and doctrine broke up the universal form of worship. It was no longer a subject in which all conceptions found expression, a goal sought by all the arts. There was no unity of thought regarding religion, and as a theme for painting it received no support or sympathy from the people as compared with what it had received in the past. Again, thoughts of a scientific and realistic nature came into the life of the North and West. Before the seventeenth century painting had been chiefly devotional; after that it was dissipated into many branches,—landscape, historical pieces, still-life, *genre*,—and with the weakening effect we have noted. The first cause of the decline of painting, then, may be set down as a lack of sympathy consequent upon the disintegration of a universal church—in other words, the Reformation.

—In the Gothic period, when painting on glass was common, the curé of St. Nixer at Troyes recorded by an inscription the fact that he had caused to be painted three windows “*pour servir de catéchisme et instruction au peuple.*”\* But after the Renaissance, painting for the instruction of the people was no longer

---

\* Rio, *Poetry of Christian Art.*

necessary. A surer method of teaching had come in in the shape of printing, which advanced painting, at first, by educating the people, and afterward helped to destroy by superseding it. The church ceased to be a school-house, and people read their Bibles in another way than from the frescoed walls. The days of teaching by pictures passed away, and with them the knowledge and care for art on the part of the people. Again, it was against the spirit of Protestantism to embellish worship by decorating the interiors of the churches. That savored too much of popery, and so still another cause for the decline appears in the laying aside of monumental work. The great walls of the churches and the public buildings where thousands passed and repassed were now comparatively bare. Easel-painting for the rich came into vogue; and art, from being a feature of public interest, became private, and, with a few exceptions in monumental painting and the public galleries, it remains so to this day.

It is easy to see that the contraction of the sphere — of art as a popular educator should result in a failure of its influence; it is easy to see how lack of demand should bring about lack of knowledge; and easier still to see that, with popular sympathy withdrawn, it should decline for want of support. Such in reality was the case; and instead of art being universal, it now passed with civilization into the various countries of Europe, reflecting the peculiar thoughts and sympathies of the different peoples. It became nationalized within the nations. Thus in Germany and the Low-

lands, in perfect accord with the matter-of-fact people, it represented commonplace life; in France it aped the court-flippancy and mock-heroism of Louis XIV.; in Italy, with the Counter-Reformation and the embellishment of worship, it copied the religious art of the Renaissance masters; and in Spain, where the Roman Church was still mighty, it flourished under Velasquez and Murillo. This time, embracing the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, however important in a history of art, is not much to our purpose herein, since it shows no well-defined movement which may be traced. Though it produced some great artists, it was a dormant period—a period when reaction succeeded to action and little effort prevailed. It was only with the close of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century that the tendency of the present time began to make itself broadly felt; and we shall limit ourselves to illustrating what is called the “Nineteenth Century Movement.” In this we shall choose France for illustration, because she is typical of the age in every respect, and all the influences of the past two hundred years have manifested themselves in some form upon her soil. Yet the movement was not confined to any one people. It passed over all of North Europe, and was felt with varying degrees of intensity in the different countries. France, England, Germany, and the Lowlands were chiefly affected, but France more than any of the others.

A custom through usage becomes known as a law. The law exists and serves its purpose. The people

to whom it was applicable and beneficial pass away. New generations and races for whom the law was *not* intended and whom it does *not* benefit come upon the scene, and now the law survives its usefulness and is oppressive. Still as a matter of tradition and inheritance it is retained in force through the following centuries, until at last humanity can endure it no longer. A revolt takes place and the relic of antiquity is cast aside. In the barbaric state we found man under a leader possessed of absolute power; in semi-civilization absolutism continues; in civilization the tradition of inherited power still exists in the minds of the autocrats. The king is the state, and the people are his subjects. But in Europe after the close of the Renaissance a new sentiment begins to form in the minds of a long-suffering priest- and king-riden people. Discovery, science, the diffusion of learning, teach the doctrine of equality in mankind. The priest has been cast off by some, and now the feeling gradually grows that the state is the *people*, and not the king. It rises higher and higher, yet is still held in check by reverence for royalty. Stronger and stronger becomes the assertion of rights on the part of the people, until at last they can be kept down no longer and revolt begins. In England Charles I. is executed, and later on James II. is driven from his throne; America revolts from foreign rule; France plunges into the Revolution by sending to the guillotine both king and queen; and Germany begins the War of Liberation. Government, which had begun in the early ages with monarchy and autocracy, comes

in the nineteenth century to democracy and the rule of the people.

This Nineteenth Century Movement, which has resulted in such radical changes, may be characterized as the assertion of rights on the part of the people; the popular assertion of man as a human being, and a factor in the state entitled to consideration; the assertion of the individual—or, in other words, *individualism*. I now wish to indicate as briefly as possible that this movement was not confined alone to the political life and events of the time, but extended into every department of human knowledge; that it roused up science, made new philosophies, created revolutions in social and intellectual life, overturned old ideas of the drama and poetry, and stamped itself upon every branch of the fine arts. The whole current of thought and action was changed by it; and if we would understand the individual and subjective painting of the present century, we must examine the cause producing it. It was an easy task to show that in Egypt under the Theban dynasty, eighteen hundred years before Christ, the individual was of no more consequence than an animal; that the king was supreme ruler, and was worshiped as a god; and that art was purely objective, showing scarcely a trace of individual modes of working or thinking. It will be, I think, as easy to prove that in Europe eighteen hundred years after Christ the old order was completely reversed: that the *people* became the rulers; that the man became a king in himself; and that his art became but the expression of his freedom, the asser-

tion of his individualism. Let us examine this further.

As the eighteenth century entered upon its last quarter it found France politically and socially at fever-heat. For a century and a half her people had suffered under kingcraft and priestcraft; had been overtaxed, enslaved, and down-trodden; and had endured, not without murmuring, the subversion of law and the distortion of regal power. When Louis XIV. died, what little good had been in or about his life and reign was interred with his bones, and the evil he had done lived after him to become the inheritance of his successors. His court had been artificially splendid, his battles and foreign diplomacy quite brilliant in the old Machiavellian way, his patronage of his friends and flatterers munificent, his administration of the finance wretched, his government of the people corrupt and oppressive in the extreme, and his disregard of human right and justice of that outrageous nature which afterward brought forth the Eumenides of the Revolution. A more worthless, corrupt, and selfish king never sat a throne—except, perhaps, his successor, Louis XV. No wonder the people turned in haste from his death-bed to greet the new monarch with "*Vive le Roi!*" Possibly they looked forward to better times; but these did not come. Louis XV. and the Du Barry were no better than Louis XIV. and the Maintenon—if possible they were worse. The oppression went on; the church under the profligate Dubois lent its aid to the corruption of the throne; the nobles by extravagance, insolence, and usurpation

continued the ill-treatment of the people. The army, the navy, the state, became almost dismembered. Financial embarrassments accumulated upon the heads of the ministers. New and unbearable taxes were levied to support the court splendor; famine increased; trade languished; the arts lay dead. It is the continual wonder of the student of history that the French people tolerated oppression so long. Their endurance was great, perhaps being induced by years of degradation, a respect for royalty, and a fear of the consequences of revolt. Those who spoke boldly suffered as royal or noble caprice dictated. The Diderots, the Voltaires, and the Rousseaus were persecuted, imprisoned, banished; since the nobility, for their own preservation, still held that the state was the king, and he could do no wrong. Yet under it all was the murmur of the people against the king, against the church, against oppression—a murmur destined to grow into the roar of the Revolution. Then the king, worn out and satiated with every sensual and selfish pleasure, stretched himself out to die alone, and once more his butterfly courtiers rushed away from his apartments to greet Louis XVI. with "*Vive le Roi!*" And Louis XVI. might have lived, and saved France even at that desperate hour had he been anything other than a weak man. He was disposed to do right, but the nobles ruled him. He listened to bad advisers, and his reign was not very different in result from that of his predecessors, save that it ended abruptly with the Revolution. The people at last asserted themselves; and when the

head of the king fell into the basket, no smooth-tongued courtier saluted the new ruler. It was Samson, the executioner, who shouted, "*Vive la RÉPUBLIQUE!*" and the mass of people without caught up and echoed the cry. The new had vanquished the old. The people, represented by a mad mob, were in power. The Third Estate had come.

The English, quick to resent injustice, had long before this revolted against their king, and it was the teaching and example of England that afterward inoculated France. The seventeenth century in its second quarter found them quarreling with the Stuarts, who claimed for the royal power all rights existent. The quarrel resulted in Charles I. losing his head and England coming under the protectorate of Cromwell. The Restoration followed, and Charles II. was in turn succeeded by James II., who attempted the revival of Catholicism. The revolution of 1688 drove him from the throne, and William and Mary came to power. Notwithstanding these events of magnitude, it was not until the eighteenth century that English writings and ideas of the rights of man became disseminated throughout France. They were then received with avidity; and when the American War of Independence had succeeded and the United States had been established, further persuasion was unnecessary. The French caught up the unextinguished torch and rushed into the Reign of Terror.

With Germany the conditions were less favorable to revolt than with England. In 1618 began the horrors and miseries of the Thirty Years' War. Half

the land was depopulated. Famine, misery, degradation, and consequent ignorance and brutality created a national attenuation from which the land did not recover until long after the peace of Westphalia. During the succeeding period of lethargy and weakness, Louis XIV. of France, to maintain "the balance of power" (a political Machiavelism which he had invented), began plundering the German provinces; and when this had partially ceased, the petty wars of succession between the various states kept the people in a continual ferment throughout the first half of the eighteenth century. It was not until Frederick the Great came to the throne that Germany, in spite of wars, began to rise; and not until 1812 that she finally shook herself loose from the grasp of Napoleon and established the German Bund, which, though not successfully carried out in all its conditions, nevertheless gave her a liberal government and a freedom of the people.

Such were the political movements of the three principal countries of Europe during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Their histories show the direction of popular thought and the pushing forward of the rights of the individual; yet there were undercurrents of influence acting upon and producing this impulse of the people. The chief of these was that of education. Ever since the Middle Ages intellectual culture and scientific knowledge had been increasing, and though with the fall of the Renaissance there was a lull in the movement unfavorable to literature and the arts, yet science pursued its way, and in France,

at least, had a most potent influence. It helped to break down the superstitions of the priesthood; it established a spirit of inquiry, freeing mankind from error; it created a basis upon which the mind might reason to nobler things. But the achievements in science and invention are so great and so many that I dare not broach them, or even mention the names of those who, like Laplace, Cuvier, Cabanis, and Lavoisier, made the age brilliant by their discoveries.

Nor was the internal world or the kingdom of the mind neglected, though French philosophy more nearly resembles metaphysics than it does the abstract synthetic thought of the Germans. The first aggressive philosophy of the eighteenth century in France was the sensualism of Condillac. The "I think, therefore I exist" of Descartes was opposed by the half-Epicurean, half-materialist Gassendi; but it was Condillac who submitted an opposite mode of proof by founding all knowledge on the experience of the senses. He taught the natural history of human cognition based on sensuous impressions, and was ably seconded by Bonnet, Destutt de Tracy, and Cabanis. The philosophy of Diderot and the Encyclopedists, of Voltaire, Rousseau, and Condorcet, was mainly of a politico-social nature. It was strongly marked by the nineteenth-century movement, and opposed the prevailing church, religion, society, and government. As a body these writers were materialistic, and to them may be attributed much of the atheism of the French Revolution. Diderot's view of life, the world, and the future, was as hard and mechanical as the age

surrounding and producing him. Voltaire was no great philosopher, properly speaking, but his pleas for liberty of conscience, his sneers and scoffs at everything in general and the church in particular, had great weight. Hugo said of him, not without some justice, that he was "the devil's missionary to mankind." Rousseau was a naturalist in the full sense of the term, taught the idea of individual rights, and in life proclaimed the need of the human heart as opposed to the social conventions of the time. Condorcet, great and noble, wrote against the priesthood and taught that all evil came from inequality. The school of eclectic philosophy, called the "Doctrinaire," founded by Royer-Collard, produced Cousin and Jouffroy; the former teaching the rule and personality of man—God in him and in all things—a seeming pantheism, which he, however, afterward denied. His philosophy favors Kant, and is idealistic. The late philosophy of France is the Positivism of Comte, which is too well known to call for any explanation.

The revolt against established law and opinion, the dissatisfaction with any and all restraint, was again illustrated in the philosophical writings of England and Germany, especially the latter. Kant began by the critical examination of the sources of knowledge, the objects of it, and the faculty of cognition itself. After demolishing reason and the senses by negative argument, he proceeded to build up a belief founded upon ethics, which with him was inseparable from religion. His object was to show the limits and

extent of the human mind; to confute dogmatism when claiming too much, and skepticism when denying too much. His motto—Think and understand for yourself, and have the courage of your own convictions—was in singularly good keeping with the self-assertion of the times. The Transcendental Idealism of Kant was followed out, with some modifications, by his pupil Fichte. The latter led German philosophy from the subjective to the objective by the subjective itself,\* and formed the link between Kant and Hegel. His philosophy, on the whole, was based upon the subjective, and is pure and absolute idealism. Schelling followed him, but Hegel diverged and established the most comprehensive system of pantheistic philosophy existent. In other respects both he and Schelling maintain the absolute ideality of thought and being. Hegelianism found a large number of followers; and indeed with the beginning of the nineteenth century so many different systems and men sprung into existence that it is quite impossible to characterize them except by their individualism.

In literature, especially in poetry, the novel, and the drama, Germany was the first of the nations to feel the motion of the rising wave. Up to the time of Frederick the Great the literature produced was imitative of Racine and Corneille, or of the English contemporary writers. The real founders of classical literature in Germany were Klopstock, Wieland, and Lessing, who placed themselves in opposition to Gott-

---

\* Saisset, *Modern Pantheism*.

sched. While at their height they were attacked by the *Sturm und Drang* school which proclaimed hostility to all rule and convention. The temper of the latter was not shown toward poetry alone, but toward politics, religion, philosophy, art. Contempt for the church and religion, contempt for the past and its opinions, impatience of restraint, were followed by a mild fanaticism, gloomy and disordered fancies, unhealthy imaginings, vain longings for the beyond and the unattainable. The representative and critical advocate of the *Sturm und Drang* writers was Herder, a man of great influence in German literature. He was a reformer, and gave to literature a vitality;\* and he was likewise a forerunner of Goethe and Schiller. The two latter now appeared as the strong men of the new departure. No better drawings of the restless, moody, unsatisfied hero of the age could possibly be made than the character-studies of *Götz von Berlichingen* and *Karl von Moor*. Both Goethe and Schiller were too great to be merely local. They reflected universal life and all movements. Goethe witnessed three stages of intellectual development in Germany. In his early days the historic past was the theme, and poets went back to mediæval times, to knighthood, crusades, castles, Teutonic forests, and haunted mountains for their subjects. In his maturer years the revived antiquity of Winckelmann influenced him, as is shown in *Iphigenia in Tauris*. In his latter years the effect of the *Sturm und Drang* agitation, which had never died

---

\* Gostwick, *Outlines of German Literature*.

out entirely, came to the fore, calling itself Romanticism; and Goethe again reflected this, in *Wilhelm Meister* and *Selective Affinities*.\* The literary history of Schiller in this respect is akin to that of Goethe, though he was a manner of man more after the Byron kind and threw himself impetuously into the action of the hour. The Romantic movement emanated from Goethe and was undoubtedly influenced by the subjective philosophy of Fichte, which proclaimed the individual. In reality it was merely an emphasized and exaggerated continuation of the *Sturm und Drang* restlessness. The aim of it was to find freedom of thought and style as opposed to the conventions of the classic. In this it went so far as to teach that the world of art was not founded on nature, but was produced from inner consciousness like the philosophy of Fichte and Schleiermacher. It repudiated all rules, confused all forms of poetry, depreciated Lessing and Wieland, exalted Goethe and passed over Schiller in silence. Of this school Novalis and Tieck were the leaders, the brothers Schlegel the critics, and Richter, Musäus and Müller the principal followers. Afterward a branch of it appeared in the Schwabian school, of which Schwab, Uhland, and Chamisso were the chiefs. The Romantic movement in English literature took place a little later, but was actuated by the same motives as that of Germany. It was the revolt of Burns, Coleridge, Southey, Scott, Shelley, and Byron against the classic style of Pope, Addison, Goldsmith, and Johnson.

\* Scherer, *German Literature*.

In France the whole tendency of the seventeenth-century literature was to establish elegance of form, and to write according to "Aristotle and the rules." *How* a drama was written was of more importance than *what* was written. Such a course naturally stifled spontaneity and encouraged the imitation of the classic and heroic which prevailed with singular inappropriateness at the court of Louis XIV. Aside from some indifferent work of La Fontaine and Boileau there was little poetry that did not take the form of the drama. Three distinguished writers—distinguished more for classic style than anything else—led this department: Corneille, Molière, Racine. Some attempt was made at romance and memoir writing during this period, and the historians Mézeray, Fleury, Tillemont, and Maimbourg flourished. Style and the influence of the French Academy are apparent in the most of these productions; but the brilliancy of sententious gems appears oftener in the works of the moralists Pascal and La Rochefoucauld, the Port-Royal controversialists, and the court preachers Bossuet, Bourdaloue, Massillon, Fénelon. The beginning of the eighteenth century was almost dead in literature; the men of the time of Louis XIV. had passed away; and poetry, which under them had never been anything but theatrical, now grew silly. The drama was little better under Voltaire, Diderot, and Crébillon. It soared in an artificial air, though it could not help but show something of what was passing in the nation around it. The novel fared better, under Rousseau, Le Sage, Prévost, St. Pierre, and Chateau-

briand, and became a mode of expressing ideas and convictions. As the eighteenth century waned, people began to awaken, and the writers echoed the political and social discontent. The stinging wit and sarcasm of Voltaire appeared in every department of literature; Montesquieu, a reformer rather than a revolutionist, had already sent forth the *Persian Letters* and the *Spirit of Laws*; and Rousseau had produced his discourse on *Inequality Among Men* and *The Social Contract*. Turgot, Malesherbes, and Necker, with countless political writers, journalists, and pamphleteers, appeared as the Revolution approached. In the last quarter of the century, tumult and excitement, oppression and injustice, atheism and fury, affected literature, making it fanatical, ill-considered, and ill-produced.

At last the storm broke; and such was its force that it is not wonderful that, for the time being, it distracted attention from all other pursuits. After it had partially passed, Napoleon declared that "the career is [was] open to talent;" but it was some time before "talent" could get itself in position to take advantage of the new freedom.\* Political, military, sci-

---

\* "Even before the Revolution, Diderot and minds like his sought to break open this path. The Revolution itself and the reign of Napoleon have been favorable to the cause; for if the years of war allowed no real poetic interest to spring up and were consequently, for the moment, unfavorable to the Muses, yet a multitude of free intellects were formed in this period, which now in times of peace attain reflection and come forward as talents of importance."—Goethe's *Conversations with Eckermann*, p. 187.

tific, and practical talent came first; but it was not until the close of the first quarter of the nineteenth century that French literature and art responded to the Romantic movement which we have glanced at in Germany and England. The movement in France, as in the other countries, was but the expression of the popular spirit opposed to kingcraft, nobility, dogma, convention, hard-and-fast law, tradition, historic precedent. The typical man of the century is seen in the Frenchman of this period. He will not be bound by laws of any sort, but chooses to do as he pleases and let the world judge him by his work. He ever appeals from a universal to an individual law applicable to himself. He wishes to be judged by his own standard, not by the standards of the world. Listen to Couture the artist: "My nature revolted against rule, so I became one myself." This was the spirit of the time. Every man was a law unto himself. That he differed from other men was good; that he was self-assertive was better; that he had the courage to act upon his own beliefs was best of all, since it produced individuality. In all departments of life throughout the leading countries of Europe this spirit awoke at nearly the same time; and though it came to France last, it nevertheless emanated directly from the people, though some of its tendencies there were undoubtedly influenced by England and Germany.

The strong feature of the new movement in French literature lay in its opposition to the style and thought of the monarchy and the more recent empire. Romanticism was pitted against the classic, and eventu-

ally the former won the victory, but before that came about there appeared forerunners from the old to the new. Madame de Staël helped the transition by diffusing cosmopolitan ideas. Chateaubriand, the father of French Byronism, though no revolutionist, yet in vague unrest, evident dissatisfaction, and choice of subjects, forecast the coming change. Béranger had more to do with natural and social than with romantic themes; and had many properties of the older French poets; but he also possessed a lyrical faculty, much wit and genius, and a brilliant manner of expressing himself. Lamennais, though a leader of influence, was an excitable genius producing ill-regulated flashes of beauty—a diamond in the rough. He was revolutionary in spirit, and in his writings favored Romanticism by a natural style of expression. Lamartine was still more pronounced in favor of the new school and has been classed with them,\* though there were many classicisms attached to him. He was an innovator in shades of color, inclined to sentiment, and was a free expresser of emotion.

These were some of the premonitors of Romanticism; but the real founder and leader of the school, from its beginning as a school up to his recent death, was Victor Hugo. He, with Sainte-Beuve and Leroux the critics, and a coterie of friends, first asserted the new principles in periodical literature. “They would have no unities, no arbitrary selection of subjects, no restraints on variety of versification, no academically

---

\* Van Laun, *History of French Literature*.

limited vocabulary, no considerations of artificial beauty, and above all no periphrastic expression." \* "*L'ouvrage est-il bon ou est-il mauvais?*" † was the only canon of criticism tolerated. No standards, no comparisons, no Procrustean rules, no judgment of a work save upon its own merits. The revolt in literary subject and expression not only in France but throughout Europe was the result of the speculative and philosophic side of man existing co-ordinate with the democratic or combative side. Democracy destroyed the old forms, and speculation built up the new. The Werther-like subject of Romanticism appeared everywhere. All the mediæval past was restored. Scores of poets looked to the East for heroes,—Coleridge, Southey, Byron, Moore, Hugo, Gautier, De Musset,—and, as we shall shortly see, the painters Turner, Delacroix, Decamps, Fromentin, did likewise. In expression French Romantic poetry was well typified in the *Orientales* of Hugo, published in 1828, in which he threw down the gauntlet to the classic. It was a studied break with the conventional model in form and meter, and was intended to announce that form was but a means of expression and should vary with the subject treated. Perfect freedom was the creed of the Romanticists; and a man like Hugo, of headlong, impetuous genius,—the modern Angelo, as he has been called,—was well fitted to be their leader. A deep and noble thinker, of gifted im-

---

\* *Encyclopædia Britannica* : Article on *France*.

† Victor Hugo, *Les Orientales*.

agination and fancy, a master of many forms of verse, he combined in himself all the phases of the movement from beginning to end. His splendid abilities and personality, together with the principles he set forth, drew about him a circle of followers—poets, dramatists, novelists, critics.

Among the most gifted of these may be mentioned the youngest of them all and the first to die\*—Alfred de Musset. The influence of Byron upon him was potent (as indeed it was upon Hugo and the most of the school), and in many respects he was of a nature similar to that of the English poet. A bright genius never regulated by judgment, dictated to by caprice, and acting always from impulse, he dashed himself to pieces against the realities of life. A new Euphorion, he rose to dizzy heights only to fall into the abyss below. His career is melancholy to contemplate, especially as the possibilities were so great. As it was, he produced some most admirable poetry—poetry which, in depth of passion, tenderness, and often in lurid flashes of the terrible, has not been excelled by any of the century. Count de Vigny was influenced by Sir Walter Scott, and in some respects scarcely belongs to the Romanticists. Exquisite finish is characteristic of what little he produced.† Barbier was a product of the Revolution, and was a satirist chiefly. Sainte-Beuve and Gautier were likewise poets of the school, though Sainte-Beuve was better known as a critic, and Gautier as

---

\* Van Laun.

† Saintsbury, *French Literature*.

a critic, essayist, and novelist. A second group of Romantic poets appeared later on, some of whom are still living. They have followed out the teachings of their predecessors, sometimes extravagantly, but oftener with undisguised individuality. The names of the leaders are Baudelaire, Banville, and Leconte de Lisle.

The versatility of Hugo destined him to lead the new movement in the drama as well as in poetry proper; and it was the production of his *Hernani* in 1830 that raised such a storm of opposition from Lemercier, Arnault, Etienne, and others. The new drama was hostile to the classic, in form and spirit. The old-time comedy and tragedy in measured verse were pushed aside by the melodrama. In this department, as in poetry, Hugo was full of power. *Hernani* was soon succeeded by *Marion de Lorme*, *Le Roi s'Amuse*, *Lucrèce Borgia*, and other dramas in which tragic passion, striking situations, and concentrated force were the main features. Before the production of *Hernani*, Dumas the Elder, who, though not within the inner circle of the Romanticists, yet nevertheless was with them in style and subject, produced *Henry III.*, and followed up that success by *Antony*, *Madeleine de Belle-Isle*, and other good acting plays. Georges Sand, Mérimée, Gautier, De Musset, and even Balzac, all attempted the drama with more or less success, together with the more modern writers, Ponsard, Augier, Feuillet, Labiche, and Sardou.

Of late years the tendency of French literature has been in favor of the novel; and in this, again, Hugo

was the beginner with *Notre Dame de Paris*, a shifting panorama of Parisian pictures of much force and beauty of setting. It was not until thirty years after that he produced *Les Misérables* and the *Travailleurs de la Mer*. Dumas the Elder, of ability inferior to Hugo and influenced by Sir Walter Scott, produced in *Monte Cristo*, *Les Trois Mousquetaires*, and *La Reine Margot* the typical novel of incident, which has likewise been represented by Eugène Sue, Janin, Erckmann and Chatrian, and Gaboriau. Balzac, in his *La Comédie Humaine*, has given the opposite view, or the novel of character-analysis. Another writer in this line is Georges Sand. Her first novels, *Indiana*, *Valentine*, *Lélia*, *Jacques*, aimed at the emotional and the pathetic; in *Spiridion* she grew philosophic; and in her masterpiece, *Consuelo*, socialistic. She wrote with great ease and spontaneity, reflecting, in her nearly one hundred novels, every phase and shade of life. Few have equaled her in beauty of expression, power of imagination, and keenness of insight. Prosper Mérimée was also an analyst of motives and a perfect master of French prose. His simplicity of style is in striking contrast to the rich and even luxurious manner of Gautier, who was an enthusiastic follower of Hugo and distinguished himself in many branches of letters. His novels *Le Roman de la Momie* and *Le Capitaine Fracasse* are marvels of description and literary workmanship. De Musset was also a contributor to novel-literature; and beside him are Jules Sandeau, Charles de Bernard, and among the later writers Feuillet and Flaubert. At the pres-

ent time French fiction, like poetry and the drama, has so many followers, in so many different styles, that it is quite impossible to specify them. The original impulse of the Romantic school has not died out, but widened in its scope. The novels of to-day are but the expression of individual thoughts and views, and are as varying in this as the authors that produce them. In all literature, with few exceptions, the individualism of the century is apparent, and the man and his work are almost synonymous and quite inseparable.

We at last come to art, and have finally to show that the movement of the century which we have cursorily traced through politics, science, philosophy, and literature affected in a like manner the architecture, sculpture, and painting of the period. Architecture, though from its limited nature not well calculated to embody much of the designer's individuality, yet within its limits reflected the now well-known Romanticism. In the latter part of the eighteenth century the revived classic style of Winckelmann and others influenced it and resulted in a restoration of the Greek. Schinkel and his followers in Germany, Stuart and Revett in England, and Chalgrin and Vignon in France, were the practical representatives of the revival, and succeeded in erecting some symmetrical and imposing structures wholly inappropriate to the century. Opposition, however, soon sprung up with Gärtner, Ohlmüller, Bürklein, and others in Germany, and Lassus and Viollet-le-Duc in France, who represented the new school, and

produced work founded on the Romanesque and Gothic styles.\* Since then, architecture has varied in style with the popular wish, assimilating, adjusting, reproducing different models, but showing no one well-defined tendency. In this, though more limited by nature, it is not unlike literature and painting, and at least shows the inclination toward individualism, if not always its accomplishment.

The classic revival in sculpture spread even farther and wider than in architecture. In it the followers of the antique were quite at home, and imitators of Scopas and Praxiteles appeared without number. Canova was the inaugurator of the revival, and he was followed by Dannecker in Germany, Chaudet in France, Flaxman in England, Sergell in Sweden, and Thorwaldsen in Denmark. Some graceful, even noble, pieces were produced by these sculptors; but their work lacked spontaneity and was not based upon any popular impulse. Opposition was the natural result. Schadow of Berlin adopted realistic portraiture, and was followed in that line by Rauch.† Drake, Bläser, Fischer, Rietschel, became more individual and assertive in their styles as they advanced, and in Schwanthaler we find the representative of the Romantic movement. In France the antique model was violently opposed by the strict adherence to nature of Pierre Jean David (commonly called David d'Angers) and the more moderate art of Rude and Duret.‡ In modern times, sculpture, like poetry and

---

\* Lübke, *History of Art*, vol. ii.

† *Ibid.*

‡ *Ibid.*

painting, is lawless within itself, and is dependent for its success upon the genius and individual strength of its producer.

The history of painting in the nineteenth century is but an emphasized repetition of the history of literature. It followed the same course, and was even more reflective of the age than the latter. Romanticism in painting started in Germany about 1812; and it would be an easy task to trace its course in opposition to the classic there, as well as to a lesser degree in England. But France stands first in the world of modern art; and, as the movement is well shown there, we will confine ourselves to its art-history, and permit it to stand as an illustration of the others. Even here we must be brief, and mention only the leading artists. During the reign of Louis XIV., painting, under Poussin, Le Sueur, and Le Brun, like the drama of Corneille and Racine, and in fact like everything in or about the court, aped the classic and the heroic. With the king's death and the beginning of the Orleans regency it became coquettish, affected, and simply amusing, lacking even the dignity of the antique. Watteau, who led the fashionable world of art by the nose, invented the soubrette and the shepherdess, and catered to the taste of the court by offering the gay, the airy, and the frothy. Chardin painted humble life, and Greuze the sentimental *genre*, both with good intent at least; while Boucher, a mannered and erotic painter, mirrored his licentious surroundings.

Jacques Louis David came next and brought

about a restoration of the classic, and gave to art a respectable tone if not originality. The preference for the antique of David was inspired by life at Rome, by a contemplation of the excavated models of Pompeii, and by a study of Winckelmann. Like many another otherwise good painter, David was bewitched by beauty of line and maintained the classical conception. He was a good draughtsman, but a harsh colorist and an unsympathetic thinker and painter. His effects are theatrical rather than dramatic, tawdry rather than substantial, imitative rather than original. Art to him was a matter of the human form beautiful, and all things else were subordinated to it. It is the strongest criticism that has ever been passed upon his work, that the form is there, but cold and stiff in death—no life, no soul, no sentiment, no feeling. “All honor and reverence to the divine beauty of form! Let us cultivate it to the utmost in men, women, and children—in our gardens and in our houses; but let us love that other beauty, too, which lies in no secret of proportion, but in the secret of deep human sympathy.”\* That “deep human sympathy” was precisely what David lacked. There was no correspondence between his art and the thoughts of the people; he reflected little of contemporary life save in his portraits, and his objective treatment dealt only with facts dead and cold centuries ago. Still, for all that David lived in restored Greek days, he had a mighty chorus. His influence

---

\* George Eliot, *Adam Bede*.

was most potent, and is felt to this day in the *Ecole des Beaux-Arts*.

Of his pupils, Girodet exaggerated his style to the grotesque, and Gros rebelled against him by his natural treatment of contemporary subjects, such as the Napoleonic battles. But Gros was always fettered by his classical education; and though he was at first inclined to the Romantic subject, and as a battle-painter was highly praised by Delacroix, yet in his latter days he again came under the influence of David, combated Romanticism, and fell away in vigor of execution and influence upon his followers. Ingres, another pupil, was an apostle of line. A believer in Phidias and Raphael, he saw in nature little but the nude figure, and in art little but the drawing of it. He placed no dependence upon color or tone, and it was upon this point that Delacroix contended with him. His conception was of that cold cast characteristic of the classic ideal; his subjects were more modern and Romantic, but the rendering of them was remarkable for insipidity of backgrounds, lack of textures in surroundings, unreal qualities of draperies, etc. During his life he was considered an apostate by the Davidians, and praised not a little by the opposing Romanticists. Horace Vernet, another battle-painter and the painter of Napoleon, chose still more modern subjects, and was inclined in his earlier works toward Romantic treatment. Instead of cold regularity he strove to paint life as he saw it, and in this he was not unsuccessful. Good draughtsmanship and a certain amount of fire

and dash were his chief excellences. His son-in-law, Delaroche, the pupil of Gros, stood half-way between the two factions, conciliating the Classicists by good drawing and excellent composition in historical pieces, and the Romanticists by his choice of subject and the melancholy seriousness of his ideas. He was eclectic in his art, and in fact became the leader of a school of that name. His paintings, such as the Execution of Lady Jane Grey, the Deathbed of Queen Elizabeth, and Cromwell at the Coffin of Charles I., are well known, and attract the masses by their striking subjects, dramatic force, and fair finish; but to the artist and the connoisseur they are lacking in breadth of treatment and the qualities are not good.

The work of Géricault was a decided protest against the traditional methods of treating life in art. Though receiving his training from classical masters, he inclined strongly to the Romantic side, and his work, such as the Shipwreck of the Medusa exhibited in the *Salon* of 1819, antagonized the Davidians and the *École des Beaux-Arts*, by whom he was immediately opposed. Unfortunately he died too early to realize the leadership of the new school, and that honor fell to Delacroix. Géricault, though not excelling as a colorist, was possessed of a strong imagination, and was remarkable for the harmony of the dramatic and the purely pictorial.\* Oftentimes his enthusiasm and the rapidity with which he worked

---

\* Chesneau, *Les Chefs d'École, Louis David, Gros, etc.*

led him to the point of the theatrical; but he lived in an epoch of revolution, was hysterical and excessive by nature, and died before his youthful energy had been tempered by the prudence of age. Ary Scheffer (a Dutchman by birth, but French by adoption), whose name has been associated with those of Géricault and Delacroix as a leader in Romanticism, was in reality more of a poet than a painter. The influence of poetry upon his painting is apparent in his subjects taken from Byron and Goethe. The best that can be said for him is that his sentiment shows the impulse of the time. His paintings affect the melancholy and religious view of life, and are well enough drawn, but lack color and contrasts of light and shade.

Romanticism as opposed to the classic; subjective treatment as opposed to objective treatment; spontaneity, life, color, feeling, passion, as opposed to the exact, the cold, and the heartless, in painting, found their first strong advocate in Eugène Delacroix. For the leader of a revolt against established conventions Delacroix was wonderfully temperate in his art; yet new and strange enough to cause great opposition from those who could see nothing in a picture but form and line. It was in drawing that Delacroix chiefly sinned; and Ingres and his following could not, or would not, see that other features, such as passion, color, or strong individuality, might more than compensate for the fault. Yet it is not wonderful that his contemporaries failed to comprehend him. He is a painter hard to understand even at this day with

half a century of years for perspective, and he could never be popular with those who look to a picture for an imitation of nature. He cannot be measured or judged by separate qualities, but must be taken in his entirety. Like Tintoretto, he sought out the harmony of the whole rather than the excellence of the part. Art with him meant the expression of a feeling, an impression, a state of mind in glowing color; and unless he be viewed in the light of his own conception, he is quite incomprehensible. Primarily Delacroix asserts and explains himself by color; and with all that he tells us of his own mind, there is still something withheld. One feels in him that reserve power characteristic of genius which always pauses on the proper line, nor risks a fall by extravagance. Powerful in imagination and strongly individual and dramatic in conception, he chose for his themes the terrible and the passionate, like the novelists and poets of his time. His model was Byron, and he painted much of the pictorial side of Byronism in such works as the Barque of Dante, the Shipwreck from Don Juan, the Massacre of Chios, and the Murder of the Bishop of Liége. As a colorist he ranks with the first artists of the century; and indeed color was his strong feature, though he excelled also in breadth of handling. His defective drawing and disregard of detail were but sacrifices to the power gained in breadth. Many of his pictures are mere feats of strength; but in his best works his skill is subordinate to his expression of feeling or passion. Neither he nor Géricault nor any of their followers founded a school in the

strict sense of the term, except in their general opposition to the classic. Romanticism in art as in literature prescribed no rules and established no canons. It simply advocated independence; so the followers of the movement, differing widely from one another, must be judged by independent standards. Yet the influence of David and Delacroix, respectively, may be traced in the art of to-day, though the lines of distinction are fast fading away into an individualism consistent with the age in which we live.

If Delacroix was epic and dramatic, Decamps, who followed him, was simply lyric, but not unworthy of praise on that account. He was not so great in imagination as his predecessor, and was more given to experimenting with methods; still, judged by himself, we shall find him an exquisite colorist, an original thinker, and very much of a poet. He was the discoverer of the Orient as a subject for pictorial art, and all the oriental pictures of modern times have emanated from followers of Decamps in that department. Countless people had seen the East before Decamps; but when he placed upon canvas what *he* had seen there, though the likeness was recognized, it appeared different from what *they* had seen. It was simply the East seen through Decamps' eyes, for he never painted a picture that did not mirror his own individual and peculiar views. In this he was independent of both David and Delacroix. He was original oftentimes, at the expense of art, and his *technique* was a language entirely his own.\* In subjects he chose

---

\* Rosenberg, *Geschichte der Modernen Kunst.*

chiefly the *genre*—sometimes the grotesque *genre*—landscape with figures and animals; views in Syria, Asia Minor; streets in Turkish towns; court-interiors, caravans, travelers,—Oriental life in general. The most striking feature of his treatment of these was the magical effect produced by his light. This, with exquisitely-modulated color, good atmospheric qualities, and breadth of handling, brings before the spectator all the spirit, warmth, and richness of Eastern life. In light lay his great strength; and, strange as it may appear, his use of it was quite regardless of what is known as the law of “values;” \* yet this was in perfect accord with his general handling, which aimed at effect rather than exact realization.

Another poet-painter who caught the spirit of the Orient, chiefly the desert and its inhabitants, was Fromentin. He followed Decamps, and was like him and yet not like him. Both were somewhat influenced by others, yet both were original. Decamps' individuality lay more in his manner of expression; Fromentin's, in his manner of thinking and feeling. The latter was more imaginative, more poetic, more refined and delicate in sensibility. He saw in the desert something besides the facts of sand and stone and knoll. He saw and portrayed the intense heat, the waving air, the color, the shrouded Bedouin, the flying horse. The deeper meaning, the essence, of the desert was made apparent. Fromentin had the poet's eye for the poetic, and the

---

\* Fromentin.

artist's eye for the picturesque. These, combined with a splendid gift of composition and a subtle feeling for motion,\* enabled him to produce some noble work, wherein the warmth, the action, the poetry of the desert and its nomadic inhabitants are portrayed to the life. His figures belong to their landscape, the landscape to the figures; his tones of color, true to the East, roll into perfect harmony, affording no sharp contrasts; his light, mellowed by heat, becomes atmospheric yet luminous. Like Decamps, his technical education was somewhat neglected; that is to say, he often lacked in drawing; but the action of his falconers and dashing horsemen is so splendid that it seems ungracious to cavil over minor defects.

Corot, the father of French landscapists, should perhaps have been mentioned before Fromentin, whom he influenced somewhat in treatment of color. He was emphatically a poet of light; and his pictures are but the peculiar views of a genius who overlooks the commonplace and the close at hand, to revel in distant effects. He seldom chose to see the nature that the eyes of the many saw; he seldom painted out the familiar accessories of a landscape. A paint-brush and a canvas in his hands were but means to reveal to the world a hidden significance. He strove not to imitate or reproduce, but to *translate* what he saw and felt,—to convey his own ideas and impressions. The leading passion of his life was the

---

\* Gonse, *Eugène Fromentin*.

poetry of the morning light. To express this was his aim; and in his nobler paintings, such as *The Orpheus*, he most fully accomplished it. Yet he was not, and is not now, a popular artist; perhaps for the very good reason that his thoughts are not commonplace, and his vision is too far-reaching for ordinary eyes to follow him. That his works command large prices and are talked about a great deal in fashionable circles is no indication of his being appreciated. Many of his buyers

"Talk of beauties which they never saw,  
And fancy raptures which they never knew."

Yet Corot was a great painter—one of the greatest landscapists the world has ever seen—and in art was an interpreter of nature comparable to Newton in science. That he saw differently from others is no proof that he saw not truly. He comprehended Nature as an influence: most people have not advanced beyond the idea that she is a form. He understood Nature as a depth lighted by a sun: most people understand her as a surface against which objects are thrown like a silhouette. He understood that Nature to the eye is not a fixed fact, but a fleeting impression: most people understand her as a vast piece of still, life to be imitated, or a catalogue of facts to be photographed on canvas.\* With such a conception it was quite impossible that he should treat facts minutely. He passed by detail and concentrated

---

\* *Atlantic Monthly*, July, 1868.

strength on the sky and its light; all else was merely accessory and suggestive. In his pictures grass and trees are blurred and shadowy, as though swayed by the wind; figures are sometimes introduced in a vague way, showing the slight classical tinge imparted to his art by his master, Bertin; and his foregrounds are almost always roughly sketched in. Though peculiarly original in his ideas and individual in his methods of expression, Corot was nevertheless influenced, in common with his contemporaries, by Constable and Bonington, who exhibited some of their works in Paris in 1825. His treatment at first was in detail with fine finish, but he found later in life a broader and freer style that more fully realized his aims. He painted a great number of pictures, many of them for commercial purposes alone, which are, as might be expected, quite unworthy of him.

A comparison between Corot and Rousseau can scarcely be instituted. They were both great, but in different ways. Corot limited himself in subject, while Rousseau, many-sided and versatile, depicted almost every phase of earth, air, sky, and water. Luxuriance of power seemed the peculiar inheritance of the latter, and he possessed that faculty of handling landscape form in mass only to be compared with Michael Angelo's command of the figure. Few landscapists have equaled him in rendering foliage. A tree to Rousseau meant something round, not a flat outline; it meant depth and volume as well as surface; and his broad handling and solid painting were well calculated to reveal this truth. In color he

is generally marked by a warmth and richness; though in this he is variable, for in his many renderings of nature he has exhausted the chromatic scale again and again. Diaz, a Spaniard by birth, but still belonging to the French school of painters, is perhaps inferior in his landscapes to Corot and Rousseau, yet by no means an inferior artist. He had his own way of seeing nature, and he generally interpreted it in a sympathetic and poetic manner. His reputation has been much injured by hasty work and by forgeries of his style. In his best pieces the handling of light in wood-interiors is marvelously effective, however distorted it may be. As a colorist he appears to better advantage in his figure-compositions. Daubigny, a painter showing much poetic beauty in his gray lights of evening on the Seine and Marne; Jules Dupré, a painter possessed of strength and feeling; Troyon, a painter of landscape with cattle; and Courbet, the so-called "realist"—who, by the way, never "realized" anything but the individuality of Courbet—may be mentioned among the prominent French landscapists.

Of the figure-painters profound in sentiment, Millet, the poet-painter of peasant-life, stands preëminent. Like all true profundity, Millet's work is devoid of obscurity, and in fact the simplicity and directness of his thoughts constitute their chief charm. A peasant born, he told with unaffected pathos what he had seen and experienced in humble life. Though dealing with the commonplace, and telling what he knew with a broad and at times almost

careless brush, Millet was never coarse and brutal like too many of the Dutch *genre* painters, and never lacked in refined sentiment. What Robert Burns was to English poetry Millet was to French art. They both described the "simple annals of the poor," their homely joys and sorrows, their loves and labors, their faiths and humble longings. But Burns was more revolutionary in spirit than Millet. Much modern criticism has been written to place Millet in opposition to the rich and the proud, and to show in his paintings a design to depict suffering and oppression; but in life he denied this, and his art does not show such an intent. His great masterpiece, *The Sower*, is not a picture of the down-trodden peasant, but of the hero of labor. Against the high sky-line in the evening twilight the figure of the Sower with his rhythmic motion grows almost gigantic in his representation of the toiler of the fields. He moves, the embodiment of manly dignity and power, brave in heart, humble in spirit, true to God. If *The Sower* represents the nobility of toil, *The Angelus* must personify the creed of the peasant's undying faith. Nothing could be simpler or more beautiful than the picture of these two figures pausing from labor in the fields with bowed heads, while on the air of sunset from the distant church-tower come the chimes of the *Angelus*. Were it greater in theme it would be sublime; yet, as it is, its pathetic beauty has drawn tears from many a beholder. Such were the themes and thoughts set forth by Millet, not as a revolutionist, but as an interpreter of the nobility in the life about him.

Technically he was not overstrong in drawing, though handling form with splendid effects of motion. In textures and qualities he was much better, and there is a wonderful charm and sense of feeling in his deep, rich tones of color. He was most emphatically a man with a mission to deliver, and he delivered it in a truly noble manner.

Jules Bréton is a painter who has worked on lines parallel in point of subject to those of his contemporary, Millet; but he is not so great an artist. He lacks Millet's imagination and poetic feeling, howbeit such splendid work as he has exhibited in his Evening at *Finistère* contains much beauty of sentiment. He is a most excellent technician, and displays it to great advantage in his figures of peasant-girls going to and coming from work in the fields, with which we have all become familiar. Edouard Frère has also depicted scenes from humble life similar to those of Millet and Bréton; and that, too, with delicacy and tenderness. Among the younger artists of to-day the blue-frocked and wooden-shoed peasantry has become a stock article. It was to be expected that the leaders should have imitators.

The painters we have thus far mentioned have been more or less influenced by the Romantic movement, though thoroughly original and peculiarly themselves. Among those who cling more fondly to art-traditions and show the influence of classical teaching may be mentioned, first, Gérôme. He is a clever artist, exact and intellectual, and tells a story exceedingly well. In addition to his cleverness, his subject chosen is

usually of a gladiatorial, heroic, or dramatic nature, and to this last feature as much as anything may be ascribed his popularity. He is not undeserving of it in many respects, for he is a superior technician, a good composer, and a consummate modeler. His shortcomings may be briefly noted. First, he is not a great originator or creator. Second, his abilities are of a superficial nature, and his characters are empty, hard, and cold, possessing no great thought, life, or sentiment. Third, his color is often unpleasant, not to say at times rankly bad. Cabanel, another follower of the classic and the *École des Beaux-Arts*, is even more inwardly empty than Gérôme; and Hébert is religiously melancholy and classically cold. The most modern advocate of form is Bouguereau, than whom a more correct and perfect draughtsman never lived. Unfortunately there is nothing to his art but the perfection of line. He is not a good painter of flesh or of draperies, possesses not a spark of feeling or of poetry, and in imagination is utterly lacking. It must not be inferred that these last-named artists are strict Davidian classicists. They have lived in the present century, and have been influenced by its tendencies, perhaps unconsciously; so that, though professing rule and tradition, they are nevertheless quite independent of them.

Aside from the painters in whose work certain influences are apparent, there are a number of artists in France, like Meissonier, Vollon, Bonnat, and Carolus Duran, in whom only the individualism of the century may be traced. In no country is the art of to-

day subject to conventional rules, notwithstanding the *École des Beaux-Arts* at Paris still affects the classic. The criticism of the age in art, as in literature, is placing more liberty in the hands of the individual, and making the man and his work inseparable. The result is that to-day an artist succeeds not so much by his adherence to school formula and graven law as by his own spontaneity and genius.

Let us now see further whether this individual and subjective art, which we have tried to prove in perfect accord with the nineteenth-century spirit, may not be shown to be theoretically as well as historically in harmony with this moving spirit of our time.



## PART II.

### ART IN THEORY.

---

#### CHAPTER I.

##### ART AND ITS AIM.

IN the first part of this book we have traced the changes in art that have taken place with the mental development of man. We have traced that art through many stages of its progress, each stage reflective of the time and civilization producing it. We have seen its standards shift and vary, producing dissimilar yet none the less genuine art. To attempt a definition or to formulate a theory that should explain it all upon one basis is an obvious impossibility which we will not essay. Art is what its age and its environment make it; and if it be spontaneous it is true art, no matter whether it conform to the line of Raphael and the color of Titian or not. The Dutch painters cannot be tried by the laws of Leonardo and Michael Angelo; nor the modern French sculptors estimated by the methods of Phidias and Praxiteles. There is and can be no law applicable to all alike.

They are separate, distinct, individual, and must be judged by their own impulses and methods. As for ourselves, we live in the nineteenth century; and I will endeavor to set forth a theory regarding contemporary art (noting that part of it only which relates to painting, and using the other arts by way of illustration) which shall show what I conceive to be its essential basis, its elements, and its effective expression.

In defining what painting is, and what should properly be its aim, I cannot begin better than by offering negative arguments. If we clear the ground by learning first what it is *not*, perhaps we shall be better able to understand what it *is*.

**AN IMITATION OF NATURE.**—And first we must deal with the popular fallacy that art is an imitation of nature. Undeniably a large number of the uncritical have but one standard by which they judge of a painting, viz., the closeness of its approach to reality. To these people all artistic considerations, such as good grouping, fine coloring, strong *technique*, not to speak of poetic conceptions, are swept away before the fiat, "It does not look natural!" The loiterer in a picture-gallery will hear this from his neighbors on every side; for the veriest tyro knows that painting is classed among the imitative arts, and from that the popular reasoning is, naturally enough, the closer the imitation the better the work. And the uncritical are all excellent judges of nature in their own estimate, and though willing to admit with

charming modesty that they know nothing whatever about art, yet they all "know whether a thing looks like anything they have ever seen before." Strange—is it not?—that these believers in nature should be invariably looking for something *they* have seen before, and never think to look for something the *artist* may have seen! What brings them to the gallery—to see the blue sky and the sunshine they have just left? Why do they read a book—to learn something they already know? Why do they attend a lecture—to be told again why the apple falls to the ground? Some there are who are pleased with the reiteration of a well-worn theme, but there are others who go abroad to gain new ideas. And this is the object of genius in any department—to point out, not what men know already, but what they do *not* know; to point out what genius, by reason of superior intelligence and keener vision, alone may know. But the nature-critic does not think of this. Like many another he is wedded to the past and bounded by convention. His standard of judgment is an inheritance of the ages handed down from father to son. It was established by the ancients, and respect for antiquity has preserved it. Indeed, if we would examine the matter we should find that it is to the teaching of the past that the present is largely indebted for the art-fallacy of imitation.

To the many, a time-worn maxim or proverb is a strong argument; an ancient idea, a truism; and a tradition or superstition, a historic fact. Thus the advice of Hamlet to the players, "Hold the mirror.

up to nature," has been put forth again and again as an argument to uphold nature's most stupid and commonplace things (and she is just as stupid and commonplace in some respects as art), when in reality neither Hamlet nor his players before or since Shakspeare's day, nor even Shakspeare himself, ever literally or imitatively held the mirror up to nature, or ever attempted to do so. So, again, the ancient tradition regarding Holbein that, before he left Basle, in order to show his ability as an artist he painted a fly on the forehead of a portrait so exactly like nature that the owner tried to brush it away; the numerous stories told regarding landscapes in studios that people have mistaken for windows looking out on nature; the portraits that have been mistaken for their originals; the classic traditions regarding Parrhasius deceiving the birds with his painted grapes, and Apelles deceiving Parrhasius with his painted curtain, have become matters of faith with some people, and prove to them beyond questioning that the object of it all is to delude the spectator into believing that he sees the real thing instead of a pictorial representation of it. Moreover, the writings of many celebrated critics have so harped upon "truth to nature" that readers have grown to think the term synonymous with "imitation" notwithstanding there is hardly one of these critics, not even Quatremère de Quincy or Mr. Ruskin, who does not rank imitation as the lowest and the most contemptible form of art. The whole course of art-education in the past has leaned toward a belief in it. Livy, Lu-

cretius, Diderot, Hazlitt, Baumgarten, have advocated it, and the great argument always brought up in its favor is the precedent of early art. True, early art was an imitation of nature, and some of the products of Greece, and even of the Renaissance, inclined toward it. And so in those earlier days Zeus was the ruler of all, the earth was flat, and the stars were the lamps of the gods; but none of these ideas are applicable to the civilization of the nineteenth century. I have attempted to show this in the preceding pages; yet the teaching of the past has a firm root in the popular mind, and historic conclusions are perhaps ill-fitted to dislodge it. Let us question it in another way.

If imitation is the object of art, why do we prefer the sightless eyes and white surface of the marble, which never could be deemed a fac-simile of nature, to the flesh-colored, carbuncle-eyed statues of saints in the churches of Italy? The old ecclesiastical robes in which they are dressed, the position, look, size, and form, are life-like even to deception; yet they give us nothing but a shudder.\* Why do we prefer the dusky bronze, that could not deceive a child, to the Madame Tussaud wax figure, which may deceive almost any one? The one is our admiration, the other our aversion. Why do we prefer a portrait by Van Dyke in Windsor Castle to the portrait of Denner in the Louvre? The one is far from literal realization; the other is as near it as is possible for skill of hand

---

\* Taine, *Philosophy of Art.*

to produce. Every tint and reflection, every fact, even to a hair on the eyelid, a pimple on the flesh, or the blue veins dimly traced under the skin, are deceptively set forth in the latter work; the head almost protrudes from the canvas: yet we do not like it.\* True, it makes us wonder; but our wonderment is of the kind we experience in looking at the mechanism of a tiny watch, or the Declaration of Independence engraved on a silver coin. Again, if imitation is our wish, why do we not like the photograph better than the etching, the colored photograph better than the painting? No hand, however skilled and patient, can equal the positive record of the camera. If its product were as satisfactory as the painting, there would be no further need for the artist. He would pass away with the mechanic whose handicraft is superseded by machinery. "What would be the use of poets if they only repeated the record of the historian?"† What the use of the artist if he but aped the rôle of a naturalist and unsuccessfully attempted to rival a machine? But mechanical work is unsatisfactory, and for the very good reason that as soon as literal copying begins, the idea of the artist evaporates and only the record of fact remains. Note this, again, in the reproduction of masterpieces: of how much value to us as works of art in themselves are the copies of the old masters which we possess by the thousands? And why is it that they have so little interest for us, aside from history, since they are literal transcripts of

---

\* Taine.

† Goethe.

the originals? Why, simply because they *are* literal transcripts—imitations. They are only the chronicles of facts; the spirit of the master is not apparent.

Imitation began with man the savage; and had it always continued, doubtless we should still be in the savage state, making flint arrow-heads, living in caves, and subsisting by the chase. It is the first instinct, appearing before reason. A boy's great ambition is to be like his father; but as he grows he becomes more individual and personal, and then, and then only, does he attract our admiration by the display of originality. Nothing is easier than copying; nothing more difficult than creating. Such has long been the judgment of the world; and hence the painter who is an imitator never receives aught but condemnation. We despise him as heartily as we do those who affected the styles of Phidias and Michael Angelo. We like not the counterfeit presentment of another person in the painter, but rather his own individuality if he possess any. Nor, again, do we like the picture which is an exact copy of nature, for, again, the counterfeit is repellent. Of what use for an artist to minutely reproduce for us the same sky, trees, and water that we can all of us see by a glance out of a window? It fills no need and answers no purpose. But if he can place upon canvas some quality or phase of that landscape hidden to our eyes because we possess not the far sight of genius; if he can tell us what he sees, feels, or thinks about that landscape, then perhaps we shall possess a picture, a creation, or interpreta-

*lost see*

tion, and we shall value it, not for its faithful duplication or even truth to nature, but because it possesses the artist's individual thought. Before this latter quality mechanism disappears. We see and are brought to know facts, to be sure, but facts transposed by the hand of man so as to convey a meaning. It is this that gives interest to a work of art; and if the nature-critics cannot appreciate the artist's conception, but prefer the imitation, it does not prove the latter to be the better art, but rather that the critics' minds are in an unnecessary state of ignorance.

Yet, strangely enough, the demand for this exact conformity to nature does not extend so much to poetry and the drama, although they with painting and sculpture are classified under the imitative arts. People can admire the rhymed bombast of Scott and Byron; can listen well pleased to the Ancient Mariner speaking as never human being spoke; and again they can find fault with Wordsworth for transcribing the talk of peddlers, wagoners, and idiot boys precisely as it might have occurred in life. They can sympathize with Othello, a distracted Moor who wanders about talking *English* blank-verse; and they can weep with Lear, who, though in a drenching storm, in agony of spirit and fire of mind, scatters imagery and simile about him in a most reckless manner. We hear no criticism passed upon Faust, Marguerite, and Mephistopheles discoursing most eloquently in rhythmical cadences and rhymed couplets, though we know well enough that not one of them would naturally talk in

that manner; nor is objection made to Dante, Marlowe, or Milton putting purely human words into the mouths of satanic people.

The same is true, again, of the players and the stage. From the days of the Blackfriars theater to the present time, from Garrick and Betterton to Booth and Salvini, no actor of any note has ever attempted to portray an imitative Othello. Such an attempt would be hissed from the boards for its stupidity or brutality. The actor, as well as the playwright, is a creator, not an imitator, and he cannot choose but give his own conception of the character. These Othello-conceptions of the actors vary widely; yet were nature reproduced they would not vary at all. But the mirror is never literally held up to nature, because simple reality in art is flat, stale, and unprofitable. What makes the greatness of Shakspeare, unless it is that he lifts his characters out of the common lot, and in the masks of ordinary men puts forth the thoughts of extraordinary men? He took Richard, Macbeth, Romeo, and Lear,—mere skeletons upon which some facts of story hung,—and upon them builded his own thoughts, and into them infused his own spirit. Sweep Shakspeare out of existence and the four sink back into commonplace factors of history, possessing little interest. Stifle his imagination by making him only a recorder of facts, and all that is Shakspearean vanishes instantly. The players are not unlike the dramatist in this. They take the lines spoken by a character and use them to reveal a new conception. Make of them but parrot-

like reciters of sentences, and stage representation degenerates into "words, words, words."

Now turn to the novel for one more analogy. Have the great novelists in any sense of the word been imitators of nature? Could they be so if they chose? Would it be possible, or has it been possible, for any of them to escape individual bias and peculiar ways of viewing and seeing life? And, after all, what is art but a point of view, and what is genius but a way of looking at things?\* Bear in mind the difference in conception while I ask, Is the world in the habit of seeing in every-day life, or has it ever seen, a young Werther, a Jean Valjean, a Lady Dedlock, a John Halifax, an Adam Bede, a Donatello, or a Harvey Birch? True, these people resemble humanity, and so did their authors; but both characters and authors are but a handful from the millions. The characters are not such persons as the world is accustomed to seeing, but the individuals seen only from the point of view of genius. The true novelist well knows that an array of natural facts does not constitute a novel; nor a photograph of a type, a hero. Precisely like the dramatist he uses the forms of nature only as a frame upon which to build. He takes and makes people as the mouth-pieces of his own ideas. To imitate is not the aim of either novelist or dramatist. They both wish to convey through characters their own ideas of life. The whole history of literature shows that this can-

---

\* Henry James, Jr., in *International Review*, April, 1880.

not be accomplished by exactly reproducing nature, save in the exceptional cases of great historic characters possessed of genius equal to the novelist or the dramatist: and this is one reason why historic tales and plays are written.

The truth is that the bare facts of ordinary existence possess little interest for us. They are the very things we long to get rid of. Reality is the humdrum of every-day life. It is around us, about us, within us. It lies down with us at night; it rises with us in the morning; it follows us through the day. Waking or sleeping it is beside us. At last, when heartily sick of its endless detail, it is a relief and a pleasure for us to turn to art. In it we forget ourselves, our surroundings, and our thoughts. We look at a picture, we go to the theater, we take up a novel or a poem, not to see what we would fain forget, not to be dragged back again to matter-of-fact life,—for there is no more pleasure in contemplating the reality of some other life than there is in our own,—but to lose ourselves for the time in the thoughts and views of others, who see farther and stronger than we do and who from behind the outer show of nature bring forth to our view something nobler and more beautiful than we have ever seen or imagined. Their creations and imaginations please us because they are above and beyond us; but as soon as the conception is taken away the skeleton alone remains, and we turn aside indifferent.

As a matter of fact, the idea of imitation has had little effect upon the producers of art, though much

upon the beholders and critics of it. In no department either in sculpture, painting, poetry, or the drama have the masters been in any sense imitators. Those who tried to literally "mirror nature" have long since been forgotten, ~~as~~ <sup>as</sup> ~~cent~~ the creators live. Some of these have been known as "realists;" but we may presently learn that there is a difference between truth to nature and literal copying, and we may also learn that art consists in the artist, his manner of seeing things, his thoughts, and his expression, and, as Sir Joshua puts it, not in the painting of cats and fiddles so finely that they look as though they could be taken up.

**TRUTH TO NATURE.**—The belief that truth to nature is the aim of art is not so much confined to the public generally as to the dilettante, the amateur, the critic, and a large body of professional artists. The word "realism" is often used to describe it, though all of the so-called "realists" are by no means believers in literal truth to nature. The variance between them, however, lies more in the method of realizing than in a distinctly different aim. In both cases they believe in truthful reproduction as the chief concern, regardless of other considerations. It varies from imitation in that it is not the painter's object or attempt to deceive or create an illusion to the senses. Its followers may believe with Mr. Ruskin that it is the duty—"the imperative duty of the [landscape] painter to descend to the lowest details with undiminished attention;" and yet, with that writer's charming con-

tradictory spirit, they may believe not so much in literal as in "generic" truth. Mr. Ruskin, for instance, expressly disapproves of the painting of leaves so minutely that the stems and veins are apparent; but he does insist upon the truth of an oak-leaf being painted so that it may be distinguished from that of an elm-leaf. Between a literal and a generic truth there is a difference in degree which eliminates imitation and yet maintains nature. This is apparent in the contrasted portraits of Van Dyke and Denner already mentioned. The one is the generic face and form; the other is the literally imitated fact. In a future chapter we shall have somewhat to say of the manner in which truths are expressed; but at present we have to combat the idea that truth, either literal or generic, is the aim of art.

As has been said, the difference between the two truths is not essentially great save in the manner of their expression. Both deal primarily with facts, and both utterly ignore the main point that facts never, in this wide world, make a work of art. They are only the materials out of which, if properly handled, something may be made, but in themselves are nothing. Yet conformity to the facts of nature is not objectionable; indeed, it is a necessary requisite of art. Veracity is not a subject for dispute, but it is not in itself sufficient to make up a picture. It should be the painter's aim to show us the greatness of his imagination and conception rather than his truthfulness to nature. The object of the fine arts is to give

pleasure, not to inculcate truth.\* In itself truth is not necessarily beautiful or pleasurable. It is true that two and two make four; that the sun is the center of our universe; that fire and water will not combine; that color is made apparent by the presence of light: but such knowledge is not æsthetically pleasurable, nor are such truisms beautiful. And, again, there is beauty and pleasure independent of truth. We see it in the rainbow or the ocean, or hear it in the music of the storm or the Æolian harp. Properly speaking, truth is the aim of science and is only relatively connected with art; that is to say, art must accept it as a condition and not offensively sin against it, but art must not be made to play the lackey to science nor be distorted from its proper purpose. The line between the two is broadly drawn, and there can be no mistaking their individual aims. To make art didactic would be quite as ridiculous as to aim at making science æsthetically pleasurable. With such a misplacement neither could exist, for an accessory assumes the place of a principal. The scientific purpose will not answer in art. A dictionary and a grammar as compilations of words and sentences are truths; but put them together and will you make a Milton's epic or a Shakspeare's play? Both the poem and the drama are required to respect the law of language, and they must not offend. But is it their aim to display the law, or to use it as the means of ex-

---

\* "The purpose of a picture is, not to tell the truth, but to gratify the æsthetic sense."—Taine, *Philosophy of Art*.

pressing great ideas? Earth, air, sky, humanity, are truths; unite them, and will you make a masterpiece of painting? Do the facts of nature constitute a picture any more than the words of a language constitute a poem? Does the artist become subservient to the facts, or do facts become subservient to his art? If the former, then a poem, however stupid or lacking in poetic thought; a novel or a play, however devoid of life and action; a picture representing any one of the inane *genre* subjects of the past or present, if only they be "true," must be as much works of art as the masterpieces of the Hugos and the Millets. Surely there must be something more than this, and the eager teachers of the truth-to-nature doctrine have mistaken the servant for the master himself. Facts and their different truths are but the blocks of a mosaic. Of what use, if the hand of the master do not touch them into life and meaning? What, then, in the completed whole do we admire—the veracity of the blocks or the genius of the master? Again we arrive at our former conclusion that the pleasure-giving quality of art is dependent on the individual thought of the artist, and a strict adherence to the truth of nature is a substitution of mechanical skill for the artistic spirit.

Finally, truth is a statement of facts; art is a statement of ideas regarding the facts; and though the latter includes the former, yet the former does not include the latter, by any manner of means.

This cry of, "Paint nature precisely as she is," is not a new one. Painters probably lived and died and

went to the shades unsung, before Agamemnon's days, with the same words on their lips. Aristotle taught realism, and there were realists, Pre-Raphaelites, and truth-to-nature painters from the very earliest days, and they exist in the nineteenth century; but while admitting their technical powers, we have yet to learn that they have produced any great works. It were better if the sentence were changed to, "Paint nature as you see it;" with the parenthetical reservation, "Do not paint at all unless you see something that nine hundred and ninety-nine of your companions do not see." In such a case the artist would be an interpreter of what he alone comprehends. It were better still if it were changed to, "Paint what you *think* about what you see," for then the artist would be a creator, an originator. It were best of all if he could combine the faculties of interpretation and origination, for then he might be a star of that brilliant magnitude seldom seen in the artistic heavens, and more valued for the rarity.

**TRUTHS OF MORALITY.**—This is one of the things that the aim of art so obviously is *not* that it scarcely merits consideration; yet there are those who seem to think that the teaching of moral truths is the highest purpose of art, and I do not think it doing Mr. Ruskin injustice to class him as prominent among the few. The idea is a trifle antiquated and has long outlived its usefulness. Plato gave it form and may have originated it, and in Platonic days when the chief purposes of life were dedicated to the glory of the

gods it was quite appropriate. But that oneness of thought characteristic of early Greek life—splendid though it was—does not exist in this nineteenth century. Thought is divided, and distinct ideas have individual methods and forms of expression.

Against Mr. Ruskin and others holding the truth-of-morality position much silly trash has been written and said, the substance of which may be summed up in two very prevalent sayings which have cloaked multitudes of sins: "Unto the pure all things are pure;" and, "Art for art's sake." Both of these sentences, though conveying negative truisms, are rendered positively false in application. All things are *not* pure to the pure. They were not so to Paul, who wrote the sentence. The most immaculate-minded can conceive impurity and be shocked thereby. The lives of Christ, the Apostles, the Prophets, the greatest and purest of earth, do not show that they found all things in a state of perfection here below. In fact it was quite otherwise, else there had been no need of those messengers from heaven. Evil lies not alone in the beholder's mind, but like a contagious disease may come from without, striking the healthy and the unhealthy alike. The saying, like many another tongue-rolled adage, is more aphoristic than truthful in meaning, and is used as a pettifogger's argument to shield a culprit. As for the other phrase, it is an absurdity to suppose that painting can ignore all the laws of life and exist independently and by virtue of its own strength. Like every other art it is bounded by a civil, a moral, a natural,

and an artistic law. It may not offend against any one of them by a positive action without incurring just censure. It may oftentimes negatively slur them by omission; but may not offend by positive falsity or misstatement. The position of affairs between those who believe in art as a teacher of morality and those who favor "art for art's sake" is easily comprehended. Each occupies an extreme position, and where one demands everything the other will concede nothing. They are both right and both wrong, as is oftentimes the case with disputants, for the proper position lies between them.

The same objection brought to the doctrine that the truth of nature is the aim of art may be maintained against this last theory. Morality is a matter of political or ethical science and has only a passive bearing on the arts. It must not be transgressed. Painting need not preach, but it must listen to and respect moral truth. There must of necessity be a morality of art, but there cannot be an art of morality. Painting is not necessarily a vehicle for the conveyance of ethical doctrines, for the very good reason that there are other vehicles that can convey them better. It may express and has expressed them, but neither truth nor morality is its primary object, for in itself neither of these qualities is *aesthetically* pleasing.

As for the philosophies which strive to prove that art is but an emanation from religion and that its aim was and now is to teach religious truths, the authors of them have simply mistaken the effect for the cause. Painting has always been reflective of the people, and

in the past they have been wrapped up in religion; hence the predominance of religious ideas and subjects, as an effect of popular sympathy.

**THE IDEAL.**—It would materially benefit a comprehension of painting if the words “real” and “ideal,” with their many definitions, were thrown entirely out of the modern art-vocabulary. They are but arbitrary divisions breeding confusion and doing more harm than good; yet from time immemorial all art has been shared between them. In classification artists are usually considered either realists or idealists, when in point of fact the modern artist is neither one nor the other. The age in which we live is too individual to permit absolute objective realization in any artist: his education and surroundings will not allow him to utterly destroy his identity, though it may permit him to efface himself sufficiently to render his work worthless. The same argument holds true of the ideal. That which in our art should respond to the name is an individual fancy, brought about by eclecticism or an imitation of the Greek ideal, and not a universal conception. In Greece, it will be remembered that the ideal was a creation of the people, an archetype, a national want. There is no such thing existent among the nations of to-day; the term is misapplied to that art which is not strictly realistic, but rather imaginative. Thus we read Mr. Hamerton’s definition: “The word *idea*, in art at least, does not mean a thought or a moral proposition, but a form seen in the mind. So far as a work of art real-

izes the inner vision it is ideal. Realism is the surrender to outer vision. Idealism is the surrender to inward vision.\* In other words, an artist is a realist when he strives to annihilate himself in the presence of nature, and an idealist when he permits his own thoughts to be added to the natural facts. And all of this may be true enough aside from the distortion of the original and proper understanding of the word "ideal." Under this definition of Mr. Hamerton's, Michael Angelo, Delacroix, Millet, and Corot would be classified as idealists; whereas none of them ever tried to record a type, build up a perfection, or realize a universal conception. They simply gave rein to their imaginative genius and painted what they thought about what they saw; and in this they were no more idealists than Vollon, the painter of the wonderful pumpkin. I do not mean to say that what is known in modern art as "the ideal" does not exist, but I do mean to say that that phrase is misused. People speak of an artist's *ideal* when they mean his *idea*. The ideal is an abstract universal conception; the idea, a concrete individual conception. The Winckelmann-Müller-Alston meaning of the word is the true one, and not very different from the Greek meaning. With them it is the perfect type, the Platonic model, the sought-after; and idealism is the adding to and perfecting of beauty by eclecticism. In this sense we, in common with European nations, have inherited from Greece the ideal form, *but not*

---

\* *Thoughts on Art*, p. 278.

*the ideal thought.* We see this form in our galleries to-day, and we have even the "ideal city" and the "ideal landscape;" but they are imitative and aimless nothings, wholly lacking in good thought and entirely out of the scope of serious work. That imaginary beauty devoid of likeness in nature, that general perfection formed by the unity of many individual perfections, may properly subserve the purposes of decoration, as did much of the Assyrian and Egyptian sculptures; but it cannot be ranked as lofty art. Any picture that does not express some thought, passion, or feeling of the painter signifies nothing;\* and this ideal form of to-day is at best but a surface-beauty, showing perhaps some cleverness of hand, but none whatever of thought.

For ourselves, then, in our consideration of modern art we will wholly abandon "the ideal." Our theory can get on without it. It had its place and lived and died in Greece. The present time and art scarcely know it, except in its distorted meaning. We live in an age of individualism, and there cannot be, as in Greece, a universal conception and type. That which Mr. Hamerton and others know as the ideal we shall recognize under another name. We might also abandon "the real" *as an aim in art*; but as a most important factor it must always be retained, for upon it are builded all ideas, and out of it spring all conceptions. The extremes of idealism and realism are equally dangerous. Either the artist abandons

---

\* Cousin, *The True, the Beautiful, and the Good.*

nature entirely and works from the imagination, producing an art devoid of character; or he literalizes the facts before him, and is wanting in good thought and feeling.

**AN EXPRESSION OF TECHNICAL SKILL.**—And this is the fond fancy of a great number of artists, and one that demands consideration. It is, comparatively speaking, a modern idea, owing its recent importance to the teachers in the French, German, and Roman studios, who, not believing that art is a language and painting but the expression of an idea, would reverse the phraseology so that it should read, “Language is an art, and painting but an idea of expression.” The pursuit of style and method is not confined to painting alone. Literature, at the present time, is full of people writhing, not with the power of passion, but with the passion of power. They have little to say, but lay great stress upon how they shall say it. Their beliefs regarding literature are similar to those held about painting. Many of the modern painters believe that the one and only thing to be admired in a picture is the technical skill of the artist in drawing, massing, coloring, and general brush-work, and that the work of the intellect, the blending of form and color to convey an idea, the sparkling thought itself, is nothing—a mere bagatelle and a secondary consideration. This is equivalent to the repetition of the nineteenth-century fallacy that “It makes no difference what you say if you but say it well.” It might as well be said that it is immaterial who you are if

you but dress well; or that a counterfeit coin is as good as a genuine one if it but pass current. It does make all the difference in the world whether you say something or nothing. It makes just this difference, that thought will live, but expression never, except as the embodiment of thought; that the man may live and attain to great ends without the fine clothes, but the clothes without the man can attain to nothing; that the bright counterfeit may circulate for a time as a genuine coin, but sooner or later people will detect the baseness of the metal. If the history of the past century has taught one thing above another, it is that nothing will last that has not the enduring substance of thought. No matter what branch of knowledge we go to, whether in art, literature, or science, we shall find that ideas are required of us. We may be possessed of a fluent tongue, an easy, graceful pen, a facile brush; but unless we have some thought to express, or some ideas to convey, what we produce will be only temporary, our position will be unsubstantial, and our ultimate downfall certain.

Perhaps there is more necessity for technical skill in painting than in any other of the arts, and it is most assuredly one of the chief factors; for it will be remembered that a grand idea is a lost idea if it be not well expressed, and the number of poets and painters born by nature, yet lacking the accomplishment of expression, would fill the ranks of an army. Indeed we should give the greatest importance to expression, for that the artist knows *how* to paint is his first claim to our consideration. We shall not

trouble ourselves much to find out *what* he may say if it is apparent at the start that he does not know his alphabet. That a man is capable of hand leads us to inquire into his mental capacity. Yet withal skillful expression is but another one of the means—an important one, surely—but not the end in itself. Something more than dexterity of the fingers is requisite for a controlling purpose. To borrow part of an illustration from Véron,\* if we should be assembled in a hall to hear some great orator on a topic of the time, and we should be told by the chairman of the meeting that the orator was not present, but that his oration would be read by a young collegian, and thereupon the latter should begin the reading in the most approved collegiate style of elocution, we should very likely be much disappointed, though the ideas and arguments would be there in the very language of the orator. We should be disappointed, for we should wish to have knowledge of the man, his style, delivery, personality. But, on the other hand, should the orator appear before us, and, with all the grace, elegance, and winning intonation of a finished speaker, deliver to us an harangue devoid of ideas and filled with threadbare metaphors and similes, should we not be still more disappointed?

Something analogous to this appears in literature, and especially in verse-making. Each year shows a mushroom growth of pseudo-poets, and some of them possessed of a very clever faculty of rhyming. They

---

\* *Aesthetics.*

are not lacking in good expression, and sometimes have elegant rhythm, but they do not last, for the simple reason that they possess no ideas; they have nothing to say. The world listens a moment and then passes them by. It is quite different with the great poetic thinkers—Shakspeare, Milton, Goethe. The world holds them in reverence for the conceptions they have realized. Their expression cannot be depreciated or slurred, yet it is not the most important feature of their works, and this is partly proved by the comparatively little they suffer by translation into a foreign tongue, as is shown in the Tieck-Schlegel translation of Shakspeare and the Taylor translation of *Faust*. The expression may be changed or varied without material loss, but the thought, if properly transferred, is unalterable. And this, through all the past, is the only thing that has survived time. Style and manner fade out and become unknown like the colors of an oriental rug, but the warp and woof—the ideas—remain.

It is not our object or wish to underrate the importance of technical skill. It is an absolute necessity, and without it painting could not exist; but it is only an accessory and not the principal. At best it is the shell which holds the pearl of thought; but what seek we for, the shell or the pearl? There are those who see and admire the former; but art has a more comprehensive aim than the display of line, mass, and color for the admiration of artists. It should appeal to all mankind; but make it dependent solely upon expression and it appeals only to the class. The execu-

tion of the hand is placed above the product of the head; and though this may please those directly interested in technical methods, it awakens no sense of pleasure in the average beholder.\* The spectator cares as little for the artist's well-preserved "values" as he does for the dramatist's forcing of a scene to a hurried ending. He looks only to the general effect. So, again, the reader of poetry never thinks of the poets slaving over certain lines to make them "fit in;" he never bothers himself with admiring the cleverness of some double or triple rhyme; he never ponders over the ransacking of heaven and earth for a fine image. He simply accepts the united whole for what it is worth, nor questions how it is made.

Still a great body of artists sneer at the "idea," and scoff at "sentiment" in all its phases. The former they generally choose to understand as "something literary," and the latter is, of course, a gruesome accompaniment to a "tell-a-story" picture—hallucinations which we will endeavor to dispel in our next chapter. They rather glory in a contempt for all things not strictly technical. "Form or color; nothing else is of any account. It is a mistake."† The excellence of *technique* is maintained, and it is only where the idea is wholly lacking (a very rare occurrence) that its value is appreciated by its absence. Any canvas that is coherent or comprehensible is not without some sort of a *motif*, great or small, and the

\* "The loftier aim of art is the work of the intelligence and not the hand."—Taine, *Philosophy of Art*.

† Véron.

nearest approach to a failure we can instance is in some of the late pictures of Turner, painted when he was demented. The pictures show that his hand had not lost its cunning, but that his mind was clouded. There is a lack of clearness, the thought is neither conceived nor expressed, and we are at loss to say whether the pictures are anything more than meaningless splashes of color. If expression were the sole requisite, then all of the mature work of Turner or of any other artist should be nearly uniform in excellence. But as a matter of fact such is not the case, and the main reason for the variations lies in the difference of quality and quantity of thought expressed. It is just this difference that separates genius from mediocrity and makes a masterpiece or a commonplace work. Strike out the thought and you strike out the artist and his product—Paint out the eyes of the Sistine Madonna, veil the head of the Moses—destroy the ideas—and of what further use are the exquisite painting and drawing, the fine modeling and carving, that remain?

The simple truth is that in great painting all things must blend together for the realization of a pictorial idea. Surely it is of little value unless comprehended, and to be comprehended it must be well expressed; but the painting alone is as absolutely worthless as the sheath without the sword, and a canvas that is merely a harmonious piece of color or a display of manual dexterity is entitled to little more consideration as a work of art than a Daghestan rug, an Indian curtain, or a pattern of tapestry.

BEAUTY.—Having now finished with those features which we have seen are not in themselves the aim of painting, but merely some of the means of its accomplishment, we come to the consideration of another quality which possibly, like the ideal, might be spared discussion without materially affecting an understanding of painting. Beauty is a quality, an attribute, and in pictorial art it appeals to and is perceived by the eyes; is recognized by the intellect (not necessarily by a process of reasoning); and is appreciated by its effect upon the emotions. *Where* it may exist as an attribute is a matter of dispute with metaphysicians, some holding that it is in external nature, and some that it is in the human mind. Farther on we shall endeavor to show that it exists in both places. But first something must be said against the fancy which demands for painting the province of appealing to the eyes alone. In one sense it does appeal solely to the sight, because it cannot reach any of the other senses. But there is something beyond. The unaided vision is physically capable of recognizing in a picture that which may be agreeable; as, for instance, soft harmonies of color; but it is not capable of recognizing the beautiful. This recognition comes from the intellect after it has been appealed to by the eyes. The intellect in turn awakens the emotional nature,\*

---

\* “Emotion is not what it has often been represented by physiologists, a mere nervous reaction from a bodily stimulus, like the kick which the frog gives when it is pricked. It begins with a mental act, and throughout is essentially an operation of the mind.”—McCosh, *The Emotions*.

and our appreciation of the picture may be determined by the activity of our emotions caused by it. The objection to the theory that the object of painting is to please the eye with a purely sensuous beauty which affects mankind through the emotions regardless of the intellect, is that an elimination of the intellect precludes the possibility of man seeing beauty, or of having emotions either sensuous or otherwise. It places him on a par with the lower animals that may live amid beds of violets, see sunsets, rainbows, and landscapes, and care as little for them as for the uglier and more commonplace things of earth. Beauty existed in the world four thousand years ago as it does to-day; but the inhabitants at that time probably did not see it or have their emotions affected by it, for the reason that they lacked the intellectual capacity to recognize it. The American Indian of to-day sees it only in proportion to his intelligence, and the inhabitants of Terra del Fuego proportionately still less than he. The Assyrians saw little beauty in the human form; but it was otherwise with the Greeks, whom education had trained to recognize and appreciate it. Turn from them and look at the barbaric Goths and Vandals that overran Rome, and how did they treat the then extant Greek and Roman sculptures? They valued them only as blocks of stone to be cut up for building purposes. Look again at the restoration of these antiquities in the intellectual age of the Medici, when their beauty became such an object of worship that whole schools of artists set themselves about imitating them. The very best ar-

gument that can be offered on this subject comes from history. Art originated with intelligence, as we have endeavored to show in our first chapters, being the reflex and the outgrowth of it; and to-day beauty is a quality the appreciation of which is confined to the intellectual and the educated.\* Discard the operation of the mind, and beauty lies as deeply hid from the eyes of man as the door of the cave of the Forty Thieves from the eyes of the passers-by. The answer offered to this is, that of course the eye must be trained and educated. And the reply is, that, to any extent, this is a physical impossibility. Men's eyes see little more and little better to-day than they did forty centuries ago; but their minds are better trained to note the impressions received by the eye. The sense of sight in the man, the beast, and the bird is not essentially different. One sees about as much as the other. But the minds of the three and their consciousness of ocular perception do differ very widely. This enables man to perceive qualities in nature which the others do not, and in proportion it raises the appreciation of beauty in the educated man far above that of the uneducated. Let us have no confusion, then, regarding the perception of beauty. It is not recognizable by the eyes alone, else the eyes of one could perceive it quite as well as those of another, and this, as a matter of fact, is not so. It is dependent upon the intellect, and appeals to

---

\* "The sight of Beauty never creates raptures for those who do not understand her."—Couture, *Conversations on Art*.

that for recognition as beauty; and the stopping at an intermediate stage is not unlike the act of the inquirer who seeks a First Cause no farther than the sun instead of going back to the Creator of all.

Confusion, again, must not be brought about by confounding what is agreeable to the eyes with what is beautiful. The one involves merely a bodily sense; the other is unavoidably connected with intellectual action. The first is a condition dependent upon one of the five senses, and may exist in the beast as well as in the human being. The sense of taste enables both of them to prefer some foods and drinks to others. The senses of smell and of touch are the same, and those of sound and sight vary but slightly. The ears of a dog are wounded by long-drawn cries, and the eyes of a bull are irritated by a waving red flag, in the same manner and for the similar reason that a man's ear is pleased with the sound of an *Æolian* harp, the wind sighing through the trees, the carol of a bird, the murmur of flowing waters; or his eye gratified by the softness of gray light as contrasted with sunlight on the snow, the coloring of green earth as compared to the desert, or the shadows of the clouds on the ocean. But it will be remembered that these sounds are not poetry, and these sights are not pictures. This is nature, not art; and these are natural, not artistic, effects. A picture may be agreeable in color in the same manner without being beautiful. The agreeable is dependent solely upon sense; the beautiful, upon sense and intellect working together.

MATERIAL OR EXTERNAL BEAUTY.—For the purposes of painting we may consider beauty of two kinds, Material or External Beauty, and Beauty of Thought—a division which would correspond in a more scientifically treated work to objective and subjective beauty. Regarding the first it is scarcely worth our while to enter into any argument either to prove or disprove that beauty is to be found only in the human mind. The *recognition* of it is, to a great extent if not wholly, a matter of education; but that the attribute itself should be solely in the beholder's thought is not necessarily true. It may be, and is, existent in nature likewise; and those who believe with Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, and Jeffrey, that there is nothing ugly or beautiful, but the thinking makes it so, are simply taking an extreme view. Undoubtedly education has changed man greatly. The belief in his mental and moral development is well founded, but we have yet to learn that he developed much of anything except himself. Nature has not changed materially, except for the worse, since the days when man was not numbered on the face of the earth; and his coming has not altered the beautiful sunsets, the sky and clouds, the sea, or the land. The rose and the lotus bloomed in the Nile valley, and the lion stooped to drink at the river's edge, before the Pharaohs reigned. The Alps loomed upward through the clouds, with the pink glow of sunset upon their diadems of snow, and the chamois, the eagle, and the arrowy pine were at home upon their heights when the Lake Dwellers were unknown. Yes; and the same sunset showered a track

of gold along the Ægean, and tinged with purple and amethyst the islands of the Cyclades, many years before Agamemnon lived or the beauty of Helen caused a Trojan war. Nature has not shifted her mantle so suddenly that in the last three thousand years beauty has flashed forth upon the globe. It has always existed from the time when the fiat, "Let there be light," was given forth; but until lately man has been too much of the barbarian, too feeble in intellect, to see it. Thirty centuries ago he trod a diamond under foot, nor ever thought of its beauty; and to-day, though he has learned much, he is still unconsciously stepping upon diamonds that the future alone can and will reveal. His evolution of mind has wrought wonders in him; but the forms of nature about him have not been changed thereby. They remain the same; but he has grown, is growing, up to them. At last, by association and education he is so mentally and æsthetically trained that he can perceive and appreciate their beauty.

There can be no reasonable doubt of an external beauty in nature. The grace of a person beloved is not necessarily in the lover's eye alone, as the poet would have us believe; for whatever we may think does not alter the features, and we may absolutely hate a person and yet recognize his or her beauty. It belongs as much to the material world as do heat, productiveness, cohesiveness. Every excellence in the picture we admire finds its original in nature. Color, form, grace, unity, harmony, light and shade, all are there. It is as apparent in the light of morning and

evening, in the sky and clouds, in the elements and in the human form, as is loveliness in the rose or power in the ocean. It has always been with us and about us, and is as much a part of the earth's make-up as the laws which govern its existence and motion. It is not strange that man should have overlooked it. The earth centuries ago revolved in its orbit as to-day; but people lived on in ignorance of that fact until Copernicus came. And again, centuries ago the same earth was held together by the law of gravitation, but it required a Newton to discover it. The dullness of perception in the majority made the existence of these great scientific discoverers possible; and it is the same dullness at the present day that gives rise to the office of the poet and the painter—the discoverers of beauty. There are fields of beauty lying deep hid in nature which, like the prophet's paradise, only the elect may see. There are emotions of the human heart which only the highly emotional and the sympathetic may understand. There are flashes of sublimity and grandeur about us which may fire the sensitive mind into glowing passion, yet kindle no spark in commoner intellects. These sights and these impulses are the inspirations of genius; and this is one of the aims of both poetry and painting,—to reveal to mankind natural beauties which the great majority of people may not see for themselves. The poet with words, the painter with symbols of words, are, then, the interpreters of beauty, setting forth to the world what things they alone may see in nature. How their discoveries are revealed we shall endeavor to explain

hereafter, only pausing now to say that it is not by placing the original before us and exhibiting what it *really* is, but, on the contrary, in another way, giving to the world merely *their idea* of what it is.

**BEAUTY OF THOUGHT.**—For its progress in civilization the world is indebted, not to the existence of its unthinking many, but to the cleverness of a few of its children. I have said in the first pages that the circumstances make the man, and that is true; but the man, if he be a genius, likewise makes the circumstances. The two act and react upon each other. The leaders of men not only shape the thought of their time, but they are the pioneers, the scouts, the forerunners of every enterprise, who signal back to the world what they have discovered. They are esteemed geniuses, and rightly so; for “the greatest thing a human soul ever does in this world is to *see* something, and tell what it sees in a plain way.”\* Each field of human knowledge has its discoverers. Science, Philosophy, Religion, Art, have had, and have at this day, their adequate representatives. Galileo, Copernicus, and Newton discovered new laws of science; Solon, Pericles, and Justinian, new laws of government; Plato, Aristotle, and Kant, new philosophies; Buddha, Zoroaster, and Mahomet, new religions; David the psalmist, Homer and Shakspeare, Phidias, Michael Angelo and Millet, new beauty. The starting point of genius, then, is at original discovery; and the second step is the interpretation of it to the world.

---

\* Ruskin, *Modern Painters*.

Now, in all the branches of subjective knowledge in which discovery is made, that which is discovered is set forth, not by the practical exhibition of the thing itself,—for that is impossible,—but in the shape of ideas held and advanced by the discoverer. Let me quote Plutarch on this: “Idea is a bodiless substance which of itself hath no subsistence, but giveth form and figure to shapeless matter and becometh the cause that bringeth them into show and evidence.”\* The mind as a means of interpretation shadows forth its individual conception, its own idea. Thus the presence of a Deity and the interpretation of the laws and word of that Deity are placed before us in the ideas of a Buddha, a Zoroaster, or a Mahomet. The existence of God is avowed by these men in common with Moses and the Hebrew Prophets; but mark how different are the conceptions! Thus, again, varying views of our relationship to that Deity come to us in the ideas of Plato, Descartes, and Kant, and still more widely varying conceptions of life, death, and immortality in the thoughts of Marcus Aurelius, Dante, Shakspeare. These are among the greatest geniuses the world has known; yet their interpretations come to us in those “bodiless substances” which we know as “ideas.” In the same manner and in an analogous field of investigation stand the poet and the painter. Their special domain is the realm of beauty, and in it their office is like that of the philosopher to discover, like that of the prophet to reveal, and like that of the

---

\* *Opinions of Philosophers*, translated by Holland.

translator to interpret. Whatsoever they may find in the world that is beautiful is made known to us by the presentation of poetic and pictorial ideas. And it is the ideas we admire, and not the realities themselves. It is not the object of either poet or painter to produce before us only the facts in nature which embody his conception, nor to offer us an imitation of them. The true artist, it will be remembered, is a genius no less than the philosopher and the prophet. He is that one man out of many who may discover beauty. To the eyes of the millions it is unseen. If, then, they cannot see it in the original, how will it be possible for them to see it in any counterfeit presentment of that original? Practical demonstration of the real thing or its imitation will not answer; we must look only through the artist's eyes, and comprehend only through his conception.

The medium of interpretation wherewith the poet addresses the mind is language through the sense of hearing; with the painter it is illustration upon flat surface addressed to the mind through the sense of sight. It will readily be seen, then, that painting is but a language of the eye whereby the artist tells what he conceives, feels, or thinks about life and nature. Mr. Ruskin recognized this truth when he wrote: "Painting or art generally, as such, with all its technical difficulties and particular ends, is nothing but a noble and expressive language, invaluable as the vehicle of thought, but by itself nothing." And Millet understood and appreciated it still better in writing to Pelloquet, the art-critic: "You belong to

the very small number of persons who believe (alas for those who do not believe it!) that all art is a language, and that language is made to express thoughts."\* Pictorial language is the painter's medium of expression and bears a perfect analogy to that of the poet; for the latter but paints with words, while the former speaks with works.† Now, undeniably, there is beauty in this language of the painter, as there is in that of the poet. It lies in the style, the rhythm, the treatment, the color. Yet in both arts this is a subordinate beauty—a means, not an end; for what we chiefly prize is not the form or manner in which the artist chooses to express himself, not his style of saying, but rather what he really says. Again, as we have tried to demonstrate, there may be external beauty in the nature which he attempts to interpret to us: and these two beauties in themselves may make up excellent art. But if the artist would produce the very highest art there must be a deeper, a stronger, a more perfect beauty than either of these, namely, the beauty of conception coming from the artist's own mind. How well Millet knew this! Thus he writes to Sensier: "I tried to show Thoré that I thought grandeur was in the thought itself."‡ And how well he has written that truth in his art! Look at *The Angelus*. The subject is indeed beautiful; and who before Millet ever saw it or used it in pictorial representation? The language and the expression are likewise beautiful, and again they form Millet's

---

\* Sensier, *Jean François Millet*. † Annibale Carracci. ‡ Sensier.

own and peculiar style. But the thought, the poetic conception, is the greatest beauty of all. In its contemplation we lose sight of other things. Millet the discoverer and painter fades into insignificance compared with Millet the thinker and poet. The mind that conceived the grandeur of an humble faith in God is above and beyond the hand that bowed the peasant heads. Look again at *The Sower!* How noble the toiling hero, how splendid the rhythm of his swinging motion! But how infinitely more splendid the intellect that could grasp the beauty and dignity of labor and justify the creation of God to the eyes of man! Throughout all great art we find this same preponderance of subjective beauty sweeping away minor considerations and in itself absorbing the attention. Eliminate the passionate thought of Michael Angelo, and the glory of the Sistine vanishes in writhing arms and legs. Strike out the ideas of Shakspeare, and the plays become but a Babel of words. No technical execution can equal it; no panorama of nature, however gorgeous, can compare with it: the product of the mind is above all. It is the one thing almost unbounded in its scope, untrammeled in its flight, that rises above reality into the regions of the superhumanly great; and the more we study it the more keenly shall we appreciate the truth that the loftiest beauty of which the world can boast is the beauty of human thought.

We should conclude, therefore, that the higher purpose of the artist is the conception of pleasure-giving pictorial ideas, and that the higher aim of painting

is the expression of such ideas. This is undoubtedly the superlative purpose, and from it downward the work of the artist may descend to lower levels, dependent upon the quality and quantity of thought expressed.

Having established the highest aim of art, it is now my purpose to speak of ideas and their kinds, and to ascertain, if possible, what class of ideas may be best expressed in painting.

## CHAPTER II.

### OF PICTORIAL IDEAS.

PAINTING, then, in its broadest sense is but a symbolic language whereby the artist may describe what he sees, feels, or thinks. If it be intelligible, it must convey to the beholder some kind of an impression, emotion, or idea; and any language that does not do this is but a tale of words or methods, and commands no respect whatever. I now hasten to place a limitation and a qualification on the general word "idea," for fear I shall presently be accused of advocating the "literary, tell-a-story" art. To the minds of many, especially the artists, the word seems to have no other meaning; and so soon as one speaks of the necessity of idea in art, visions of canvases in which the painter usurps the place of the poet or the novelist immediately rise to view as examples in hand.

Now, there are ideas, and there are ideas—thousands of them in every branch of human knowledge, in jurisprudence, religion, philosophy, history, science, literature, art, and it must be obvious that each department has its own peculiar aim and way of making itself understood. Perhaps, then, it is unnecessary to prove that ideas of binomial theorems, of laws of real estate, or of exegetical theology have nothing whatever to do with art, for they belong to foreign fields

and are not, in themselves, capable of giving æsthetic pleasure. We have already seen that it is an indispensable requisite of art that it shall please, and so we place the first limitation upon the word *idea*, by saying it must be beautiful, pleasing, or æsthetic. Ideas of all kinds are conveyed to the mind through the five senses, and all of these senses are capable of distinguishing the agreeable from the disagreeable, but only two of them may recognize the beautiful. Again, it is not necessary that we should prove that ideas conveyable by touch, taste, and smell have nothing to do with the fine arts, for these senses are generally considered non-æsthetic and incapable of revealing ideas of beauty.\* Our investigation, then, is narrowed down to a consideration of beautiful ideas brought to the mind by the two æsthetic senses of sight and hearing; and the examination of these brings up the limitations of the arts so admirably set forth by Lessing in his *Laokoön*.

Evidently that beauty which depends on sound, volume, melody, or harmony should find its expression in oratory and music; that which depends on outline and form should be expressed in sculpture; that upon color, perspective, light and shade, in painting: and all of these beauties may find some kind of expression

---

\* This is a concession made merely for the purpose of disposing of three of the senses; for, whether æsthetic or not, they are irrelevant in this connection, as painting is dependent on sight alone. In a work on æsthetics it might be well questioned whether the senses which are here left out of account are not capable of conveying ideas of comparatively lesser beauty.

in poetry. The low, dull hum of marching armies, the blare of trumpets, the roll of drums, the sound of the storm, the wail of the forest, the cry of misery or of gladness, the voice of pity, of love, or of tenderness, are not for painting or sculpture. These arts may be only suggestive of sound, for they appeal, not to the sense of hearing, but to the sense of sight. The proper mediums of expression, then, for the instances enumerated are found in music and poetry. On the other hand, beauty of form may be set forth by sculpture and painting, very indifferently by prose and poetry, and not at all by music. We have in the classics descriptions without number of Zeus, Hera, and Aphrodite, but we do not comprehend the Greek idea of them until we see them in the marble. Suppose we had never seen the statue of Giuliano de Medici : what sort of an idea of his personal appearance could we gather from the prose descriptions of him ? As to painting, Mr. Hamerton, somewhere in his writings, gives an excellent illustration in the case of a child which had lost one of its parents before years of remembrance. When the child grows up it desires to know the face of this parent ; but no relative or friend, either by tongue or pen, can describe a face that it can see. But a portrait of the dead is produced, and a glance is sufficient to reveal what volumes could not have described. Form and color baffle description by words, and poetry inadequately creates their mental image. Thus, a word-painting of the splendor of sunset but discloses the poverty of language. Sound is insufficient to portray color and

light. To properly convey these qualities to the mind, the sense of sight is necessary and the brush of the painter is required. A botanist or a poet may describe the formation of a rose; but had we never seen one, could we conceive a perfect image of it? Obviously not; for once more form and color come into play. Again, the novelist, poet, or orator may by illustration and simile describe to us an attitude or passion of love, hate, pride, strength, majesty, joy, or sorrow; it is not outside of their sphere of action: yet it can be equally well, if not better, treated in sculpture and painting by the expression and pose of face and form.

But while poetry, the novel, and the drama are permitted, to a certain extent, to wander at liberty through the realms of the other arts, producing harmonious, sculpturesque, and picturesque effects,—inadequately, perhaps, yet nevertheless in some way producing them,—these other arts of music, painting, and sculpture are confined within themselves, and may not vary from their fixed purposes. The glowing color, betraying the exuberant life in painting, cannot burst forth in song; and

“ What fine chisel  
Could ever yet cut breath?” \*

The suggestion of motion and life can easily be given, and so the suggestion of related ideas. But

---

\* *The Winter's Tale.*

painting and sculpture may not "tell a story," for they cannot speak. Story-telling requires literature with its many side-facilities—its capability of addressing the ear by sound, and the mind's eye by mental images. The sad eyes and death-struck face of that fair young woman who looks forth from castle walls across the malarious Campagna tell no story in themselves. The picture but shows one overcome by disease and woe, taking her last look across the waste. It may suggest *Pia de Tolomei*, yet the story of the cruel husband who placed her in that prison in order that she might contract the fatal malaria of the place is not written on the canvas, but must be learned from the title or a catalogue. So, again, the rigid muscles, the half-opened mouth, and the congealed brow of the Laokoon betray his agony, and the drooping head and relaxing muscles of the Galatian tell that he is dying. But the former utters no death-shriek, and the latter tells no story, though both are suggested. It was the poet who, supposing the Galatian to be a gladiator dying in the arena, told the story of his last thoughts being far away on the banks of the Danube, where his young barbarians were at play beside their Dacian mother. The poem and the statue or the picture are not links in a chain, but separate and distinct creations, dependent in no way one upon the other. They both deal with beautiful ideas, and the goal striven after in each instance is the human mind; but the poem uses primarily the avenue of sound, and the marble and the painting the avenue of sight: one

articulates sounds in time; the other uses forms or colors in space.\*

Of the two æsthetic senses, then, painting addresses only the sense of sight; it cannot chant an epic, sing an opera, or tell a story. So one more limitation is put upon it; and we might now amend our definition by saying that the aim of painting is the expression of a beautiful idea appealing to the intellect (or to its effect, the emotions, if the word is preferred) *through the eyes alone*. But this would also define sculpture; and we must discriminate between it and painting, for their aims, again, are separate and distinct. Sculpture in its nature is plastic; and where color is not a primary and necessary feature, form can perhaps be best shown by it, since it gives all the dimensions without illusion. Painting, on the other hand, can best depict those subjects wherein color, perspective and chiar-oscuro, are requisite, and is in nature not so plastic as pictorial. We therefore further amend the definition and limit the range of ideas to be expressed in painting by requiring that they shall not only be beautiful, but *pictorially* beautiful. Let us now further examine their scope and nature.

We must first consider that there are degrees of beauty in ideas, as there are in natural forms. In the latter, for instance, we mark the difference between the bud and the full-blown flower, the gentle river and the outspread ocean, the low rolling hill and the lofty mountain. In all forms of nature there is a

---

\* Lessing, *Laokoön*.

gradation from a commonplace to an almost perfect beauty; and the same gradation applies to all æsthetic thought, from a conception slightly raised above "the pretty" to the highest pitch of sublimity. There may be greatness, mediocrity, smallness, vagueness, or almost an absence of idea; and in painting it is dependent very largely upon the degree of thought whether the artist produces a masterpiece, something mediocre, or merely a decorative picture. To be sure, there are those artists in the past who have frittered away a great deal of strength over inanities and yet produced pictures. But it would seem as though the pictures existed not by virtue of their shortcomings but rather in spite of them, through redeeming excellences. People read and admire a certain English poet of contemporary fame for his musical flow of words, admitting his poetry to be often unintelligible. But consider how much greater a poet he might be had he *thought* to add to his rhythm. In the same way some of our modern novelists are admired for their style and clever conversations. Like the poet, they have nothing in particular to say, but they say that nothing in such an agreeable manner that oftentimes we lose sight of the main object in our admiration of some brightly-written description. In this manner, many a trial-lawyer leads a jury away from the point of truth by divergence into a side issue; and many an artist paints a picture that attracts attention, not because of its imagination, but because of some excellence of *technique* that diverts the observer's attention into a channel foreign to the true one. But this

proves nothing except that people may be deceived. It does not prove that an idea regarding the wet and scaly appearance of a fish is as good for the purpose of painting as an idea of the holiness of the Madonna. It does not prove that the Medici statue by Michael Angelo is as great as his Moses; that Raphael's Stanze are equal to his Sistine Madonna; nor that any of the commercial pictures of Millet can be compared with his Angelus. Let us set aside this deceptive art for the present, and let us dispense with the fallacious reasonings and false comparisons of the populace. It is no argument to say that a hand painted by Leonardo is worth all the work Carlo Dolci ever produced. Admitting it to be true, it only proves one artist superior to the other, and does not affect the question of the importance of thought. The proper mode to prove this latter is by comparing an artist, not with another artist, but with himself.

Granting the difference in the appreciative value of art to be dependent in a large degree upon the greatness or smallness of the conception expressed, and we are ready to inquire into the nature of the highest ideas of beauty. In the superlative realm of æsthetic creation we meet with that art which has for its first, last, and central aim the expression of an overpowering idea. This is the sublime; and my definition of it shall be that preponderance of one idea which by its magnitude and volume overwhelms and masters the mind to the exclusion of all other considerations.\*

---

\* Blair in his *Rhetoric* states the fundamental quality of the sublime to be a "mighty force or power;" and regarding litera-

Its sphere is the very loftiest altitude attainable by the mind, and its grandeur the highest of comprehensible beauties. Yet the beautiful *per se* is not always the sublime: the latter includes the former, but the former not the latter. Again, sublimity is always pleasing, even though it be possessed of terrors and dangers. Up in the high mountains where the storm and the avalanche may overwhelm, where the lightning may strike, where death may come suddenly and swiftly, the mind turns instinctively to admire the grandeur of the dangerous power. The tempest at sea when the ship is tossed like a cockleshell, or the rising of the desert *samoum*, the onward march of the sands, the roar, the lightning, the yellow sky, and the blood-red sun, cannot close our eyes to the beauty of the warring elements. Our admiration of the power which may destroy blinds us to fear and peril.

So, again, we forget the horrible with the dangerous. In that dread scene at twilight when

“the sunless day went down  
Over the waste of waters like a veil,”

and night and fear and death remained alone with the shipwrecked crew;\* when all hope had fled and the final struggle with death had come,—in that picture of horror there is a sublimity that makes it beautiful. After the ship has gone down and the crew has

---

ture he says: “The main secret of being sublime is to say great things in few and plain words.”

\* Byron, *Don Juan*,

perished, and all is hushed save the remorseless dash of billows,—in the last scene of all, when from out of the darkness there comes,

“Accompanied with convulsive splash,  
A solitary shriek, the bubbling cry  
Of some strong swimmer in his agony,”—

even then there is a beauty predominant which attracts us. Nothing can excel the horror of a cavalry charge like that at Balaklava, when the steeds and their riders, line upon line, in perfect obedience to orders, sweep into the very jaws of death. Yet it is sublimely beautiful to contemplate, through the one idea of heroism. We forget that there is carnage and bloodshed, agony and death; we forget the roar, the clash, the shout; we forget earth, air, sky, the universal and existent whole. Everything is dashed aside by the overpowering thought of self-sacrificing heroism. Is it wonderful, then, that those of highly emotional nature, borne along by such a motive, oblivious to all else, upon just such fields as Balaklava have sprung to horse and ridden to certain death with their companions? Is it wonderful that Cambronne and the Guard at Waterloo, blind to everything but honor, and fronting death, should have refused all terms of surrender? Call it patriotism, enthusiasm, heroism, fanaticism, whatever you choose; but is it not produced by the resistless impetus of one sublime idea? All the agony and suffering of the Christ hanging upon the cross does not make the contemplation of it in language or in painting repugnant

to us. The glorious idea of self-sacrifice for the redemption of the world overcomes the repellent features. So Cranmer and Bruno at the stake, and Galileo before the Council, with the injustice, torture, and misery of their condemnation, do not make us shudder, for the courage of conviction sufficiently strong to defy death is predominant. Destroy this idea,—make the execution of Cranmer and Bruno nothing more than the penalty paid by two felons for crime committed,—and how quickly the scene turns to one of disgust from which we shrink away!

The sublime is so transcendent in itself that often-times its splendor blinds us; we can but faintly comprehend it, and utterly fail in the power of expressing it. It may be as far removed from the utmost stretch of the imagination as are the faintly-seen stars in the firmament; or it may be that the idea is so infinite in scope that we cannot contemplate it any more than we can gaze with naked eye upon the face of the sun. This but proves the limitation of the human mind; for, as thought ascends, the beautiful continues to unfold in greater power. Man's intellect is bounded by an orbit and a law of gravitation as surely as is his body. Out of his fixed circle he may not go. The strongest and swiftest winged eagle fails to soar beyond the atmosphere into space. And so the human mind lacks power to grasp the boundaries of the beyond. Man has a dim yet overpowering idea of a Personal Deity; but let him try to express that idea, and how insufficient is the conception! Michael Angelo's picture of God in his Creation of Eve is but

a majestic man of years, inspiring reverence, and not the Father Almighty; and the conceptions of Him expressed by Goethe, Milton, Byron, Raphael, and Blake but humanize Divinity.

Time and space are appalling in their sublimity; but what swift pen or skilled brush shall present them to us? The one word "forever" will awaken indescribable sensations; and the eye that can look beyond our world into the vasty realms of the stars will be overwhelmed by the incomprehensible. Even in this world of ours we often meet the sublime in tangible form and shape, and feel and know that it is indescribable. Oftentimes people on the height of Mürren gaze upward at the peak of the Jungfrau and turn away in tears. And looking upon such mightiness, what tongue would attempt to describe it? What poet has ever done it? Byron degraded Mont Blanc by likening it to a petty monarch upon his throne, and Coleridge made it ridiculous by describing it as piercing the "ebon mass" of air around it like "a wedge." Monarchs and wedges and Mont Blanc! They neither of them builded so well as they knew, or they never would have compared the greater with the lesser. Nor are the painters happier in expression. There have been many who have sought to place this grandeur upon canvas; but the world has yet to see one who has succeeded. Poets and painters, novelists and travelers, can describe the form of Mont Blanc; they can picture its height and its color, its rocks and its trees, its clouds and eternal snows: but they cannot give form to the overwhelming idea

of colossal might. In looking upon such scenes, form and detail do not arrest our notice. The slowly-moving glacier, the riven and scarred rocks, the pines, the clouds, the blue sky, are forgotten in the presence of higher beauty. This majesty of mountain-mass is the pleasing, the beautiful, the sublime, in one of its loftiest forms; but it will not answer the purposes of art, for it is beyond the uttermost rim of artistic comprehension, and necessarily of expression.

Another instance of the grand, and likewise the incomprehensible, over which poets and painters have stumbled and fallen, is Niagara. A glance will partially reveal to us its power; but no number of glances will enable us to conceive the idea and bear it anew either in poetry or painting. Artists have for years tried to do it, but failure has ever stared them in the face. They have made fairly good pictures, but only by those diverting side-lights of which mention has already been made. Some minor excellence is put forth as the chief consideration, and the observer's attention is turned aside from the true quest—much as the boy is lured from the pheasant's nest—by a prospect elsewhere. One artist dazzles us with a gorgeous rainbow below the Falls; another makes us look at the rising clouds of moist spray; another focuses the light on the blues and emerald-greens of the falling water; and still a fourth induces us to look at the light riding clouds in the air. Component parts thus make up the separate pictures, but no one artist grasps the main idea, and no one painting tells the grandeur of the cataract. Like Mont

Blanc it is quite beyond the realm of comprehension; and not until one of superhuman mind shall come will the mighty rush of waters be translated upon page or canvas.

Still another illustration, to descend to that which is comprehensible, may be found in the ocean. Though vaster than the mountains and the cataract, it is nevertheless more familiar and intelligible to us; and sublimity belongs not alone to the incomprehensible, though perhaps that is its highest form. It is found wherever anything elevates the human mind.\* Sun, moon, and stars do not alone possess it. It is in the earth, in the sea, and in the sky; in landscape, in humanity, in the life about us. In the descending scale, then, between the inconceivable and the conceivable, we come to look upon the ocean. Hundreds of modern painters have chosen it for their subject, and by the same process of magnifying side-lights we have noted in the paintings of Niagara, though perhaps in a less degree, they have made good pictures. They have told of cloud and breaking wave, of greens, blues, and yellows, of sunlight and moonlight upon it, of ships and shipwrecks, of storm and death; but few indeed have told us of the ocean's uncontrollable power. The difficulty of comprehending and expressing such an idea is almost insurmountable, and by way of lessening the greatness of the subject the majority of marine painters (quite unconsciously, perhaps) confine their pictures to a few miles of sea-scape

---

\* Ruskin, *Modern Painters*.

in or near some harbor. Thus the attention is divided between land and sea, and the idea of power diminished. Rare, and as seldom seen on earth as the Byrons, are the painters sufficiently strong of mind and sure of hand to paint the

“ glorious mirror where the Almighty’s form  
Glasses itself in tempests; in all time  
Calm or convulsed—in breeze or gale or storm;  
Icing the pole, or in the torrid clime  
Dark heaving; boundless, endless, and sublime—  
The image of Eternity.” \*

Yet this is the one idea that sweeps away all other thoughts; this is the *only* idea that one of emotional or æsthetic nature can possess in looking upon the ocean. Again and again as we gaze out over the vast expanse recurs the thought of its unconquerable strength, its vastness, its dread, its loneliness. Let those who will, descend to the shore and amuse themselves with pebbles and sea-shells. We may count them with the children.† But the poet and the painter should not be there. The moon and the stars may not shine in the same day with the sun.

Though appealing to different senses, poetry and painting are analogous to each other in the conception and rendering of ideas; and perhaps there is no better way of proving the value of ideas than to

---

\* Byron, *Childe Harold*.

† Sir Isaac Newton late in life modestly said of himself that he had been like a child on the sea-shore gathering smooth pebbles and shells, while the great ocean of truth lay undiscovered before him.

show their predominance in the masterpieces of both arts. For instance, the loftiest pitch of poetry is reached in the Song of the Archangels in the Prologue to *Faust*:

“ Die Sonne tönt nach alter Weise  
 In Brudersphären Weltgesang,  
 Und ihre vorgeschriebne Reise  
 Vollendet sie mit Donnergang.  
 Ihr Anblick gibt den Engeln Stärke  
 Wenn Keiner sie ergründen mag;  
 Die unbegreiflich hohen Werke  
 Sind herrlich wie am ersten Tag.”\*

The glory of the sun is so great that even the angels draw power and light from his burning face. He is the one and only luminary; so brilliant that all others hide their diminished lights. Listen again to the expression of the same idea in Ossian: “Thou comest forth in thy awful beauty; the stars hide themselves in the sky; the moon, cold and pale, sinks in the western wave: but thou thyself movest alone.” Once again hear Byron:

\* “The sun-orb sings in emulation  
 ’Mid brother-spheres his ancient round;  
 His path, predestined through creation,  
 He ends with step of thunder-sound.  
 The angels from his visage splendid  
 Draw power whose measure none can say:  
 The lofty works, uncomprehended,  
 Are bright as on the earliest day.”

—*Bayard Taylor's Translation.*

“Thou material god !  
 And representative of the Unknown  
 Who chose thee for his shadow ! Thou chief star,  
 Center of many stars ! which makest our earth  
 Endurable, and temperest the hues  
 And hearts of all who walk within thy rays.  
 Sire of the seasons! Monarch of the climes  
 And those who dwell in them.”\*

Let us now glance at the “majestical roof” of heaven, which is but as the mighty mirror of the sun himself. How like an army of angels the clouds move along the sky, “covering the East and the West with the waving of their wings, and robing the gloom of the farther infinite with a vesture of divers colors, of which the threads are purple and scarlet, and the embroideries flame.”† Change the point of view, and each cloud becomes an emblem

“of the departed soul  
 To whose white robe the gleam of bliss is given,  
 And by the breath of mercy made to roll  
 Right onward to the golden gates of heaven.”‡

Change the view again, and the clouds are voyaging

“Their sun-bright path in folds of silver; some  
 In golden masses float, and others have  
 Edgings of burning crimson.”

Change once more, and they become

“The ornament of heaven,  
 Who give to it its gayest shadowings  
 And its most awful glories.”§

\* *Manfred.*

† *Ruskin.*

‡ *Wilson.*

§ *Percival.*

It will be observed in the quotations we have made that the sun, sky, and clouds each present one predominant idea of power or of glory. Now, if we keep this fact well in mind and turn from poetry to painting, we shall find their exact counterpart in the suns and skies of Turner. Mr. Ruskin pronounces him one of the greatest painters that ever lived, and the world thinks the critic very right in his general estimate, but not quite so correct in his enumeration of the special features of Turner's greatness. He holds high rank,—not because he is the "only man" who correctly drew the form of a cloud; or the "only man" who knew about the forms and cleavages of rocks; or the "only man" who painted the form of an oak-leaf so that it could be told from an elm-leaf,—but because he is the only (English) man who conceived and told sublimely the glories of the sun, sky, and clouds. An artist is not great by virtue of perceiving small things and rendering them with dexterity, and Turner never thought to be renowned by his truth of leaf and grass-blade. He never thought people would pry into the conformation of stick and stone, and petal and stalk, when the sun was in the heavens before them; and even if it be admitted that he did think so, it was one of his mistaken ideas to which no importance need be attached. People who are always examining a foreground corner of a canvas for the purpose of finding out whether the minutiae are "true to nature" remind one of Humpty-Dumpty in the pantomime, who strikes a match to search for a lighted lantern. They are so busy look-

ing for exact form that they never see light. There is nothing admirable in a lighted lantern except its brilliancy; and though people oftentimes ornament it to relieve its bareness of outline, yet they do not imagine the ornamentation is of more value than the light. So there is nothing to the best of Turner's paintings but the sun and its reflected splendor on sky and cloud, river and ocean, hillside and meadow; and if in these pictures flowers, grasses, trees, and rocks appear, it is only for ornamental and general effect. With Turner this ornamentation is at times carried to such an extreme that the main idea is confused and almost lost. This is the case with "the two Carthages," which Mr. Ruskin quite rightly calls "nonsense-pictures." They are so, however, not because "the foliage is sacrificed to the architecture, the architecture to the water,—the water is neither sea nor river nor lake nor brook nor canal, and savors of Regent's Park,"—but because the glory of the sun has been detracted from by the Arabian Nights palaces along the shore, and the tell-a-story figure-groupings in the foreground. Herein lies the "nonsense;" and there is not a little of it in his *Téméraire* and in his *Ulysses*, the sun being pushed off into a corner to balance the ship in the one picture, and *Ulysses* and *Polyphemus* in the other. In a few of his pictures (for Turner was not always "splitting the ethereal blue" of sublimity) he bends his whole energy upon the effects of flaming sunlight, and details and side issues are passed over or nearly obliterated, as in the Venetian piece, *San Benedetto looking to Fusina*.

Here the object-values are correctly maintained in their proper relation to the idea; but the picture is not credited with as good color as the *Ulysses* or the *Téméraire*.

The scale of beauty in nature is like Jacob's ladder—its greatest brightness is at the top; but the lowest round of it is not without some splendor. So, though there be lesser glory in diffused light than in the sun itself, still there is a beauty which may attain sublimity if rightly treated; and as we descend the scale of gold we find many artists dealing with light and its reflection upon cloud or sea or hill, or valley. To Corot, for instance, the most beautiful thing in nature was the pale glow of morning and evening. This one beauty absorbed him as much as the sun absorbed Turner. He saw and felt little else; and looking at the morning light standing

“Tiptoe upon the misty mountain-tops,”

he seemed to overlook the earth. The lesser was lost in the greater. It was the passion of his long life, and he saw it even in the delirium of his dying hour. His singleness of view is apparent in almost all his pictures, especially in *The Orpheus*—a large picture—the one predominant idea of which is the yellow flush of morning rising up the eastern skies. When he painted it, Corot seemed to have possessed himself of the very eyes of Orpheus—he who each morning stood upon the mountain-top to greet with a hymn of praise the sun-god Apollo. It cannot be imagined that either Orpheus or Corot saw anything in nature

at that time but the beauty they both praised; and surely Corot never intended that those for whom he painted should see anything else. All things of the created world like

“The vapors round the mountains curled  
Melt into morn, and light awakes the day.”

For this reason he does not distract our attention by minutiae in the foreground. With him trees and foliage and figures are suggestive, but never of sufficient importance to detract from or share the central beauty. This is why in *The Orpheus* the figure is only fairly modeled, the trees indifferent, and the grass “painty;” and yet it has been criticised and denounced for these very excellences—criticised by the Humpty-Dumptys looking for the lighted lantern, and denounced by Newtonian children looking for sea-shells on the beach, with a great ocean of light lying undiscovered before them.

But the sun and his splendor are not the only things that are beautiful in creation. The clouds that obscure them in storm are frequently sublime for their power and volume. Often the light comes not up in splendor. The morn

“riseth slowly as her sullen car  
Had all the weights of sleep and death hung at it;  
She is not rosy-fingered but swol’n black;  
Her face is like a water turned to blood,  
And her sick head is bound about with clouds  
As if she threatened night ere noon of day.” \*

---

\* Jonson’s *Catiline*.

Storm and darkness are mighty in their strength; and who, be he poet or painter, can translate their power like the incomparable Rousseau? And who, when the storm has passed, when

“the thunder,  
Winged with red lightning and impetuous rage,  
Perhaps hath spent his shafts, and ceases now  
To bellow through the vast and boundless deep,”\*

can picture the still angry and sullen gloom of the tempest like Courbet? Or who portray the dull gray leaden clouds that hang like a mighty veil above the lowlands like Daubigny? The face of nature has a different mood with each hour; and if we do but look upon her with the poet's eye, we shall see her beauty and feel its charm, whether she be clad in gay garments like a bride or robed in mourning like a widow. We would not have the sun forever in the sky. There is a time for the moon and stars, the clouds and the storm. We would not always be looking up for light. There is a beauty on earth, in the mountains, the valleys, the lakes, the rivers—aye, in the component parts of these. The trees are above the grass, as the rose is above the violet; yet in their humbler spheres they are all beautiful. Almost any idea regarding nature, if of sufficient greatness to stand alone, may be made sublime by artistic treatment; but when the idea is so small as to be dependent upon other relative ideas, or upon beauty of form or color, such as may be instanced in the case of a

---

\* Milton, *Paradise Lost*.

flower, a tree, a cloud, or a fair landscape, then it falls into the second scale of simple beauty. Of this latter we need not now treat, for in the higher realm we have yet to speak of human action, power, and passion.

The sublime in the human subject is conceived and expressed in precisely the same manner we have instanced in the sun and light, clouds and storm. The object of the artist is identical in every instance, namely, so to express one idea that its force shall overcome other considerations. In the range of conceptions relative to humanity nothing can have greater weight than religion. Here we come to an agreement with Mr. Ruskin; for religion may become one of the themes, but not the sole aim, of painting. Christ, the Madonna, the Apostles, the saints, and the martyrs have been of earth and are suited to pictorial representation; hence from the beginning they have been chosen to set forth those ideas of truth, faith, and holiness which represent Christianity. There is no loftier theme for the pen or the brush than the Crucifixion. It was of such profound moment that in the darkness of that hour the earth quaked, the rocks were rent, and the graves of the dead were opened. The event shook the world, and an idea of it upon canvas, such as some of the great masters have painted, might well shake the beholder with the power of sublimity. Again, the Madonna —whether borne through the lighted sky as in the "Immaculate Conception" of Murillo; or, the Child in her arms, walks upon the clouds as in Raphael's

“Sistine Madonna;” or with maternal brow holds out her restraining hand to the Infant as in Leonardo’s Madonna—is always sublimely beautiful, because appealing to our loftier sentiments with the idea of purity and holiness. So, in a lesser degree, there is a sublimity in the courage of the many saints and martyrs to whom faith was stronger than persecution or death.

Next to the religious comes the moral-sublime, having a basis upon heroism. But it has not sufficient to do with painting to detain us. It is hardly pictorial, and appeals more directly to the intellect through literature. This is true, again, of the grand in the intellectual, and to some extent with the sublime in history; though men and events are certainly proper subjects for pictorial art, and around the heroes of history there is always thrown a halo of grandeur. Napoleon was great on the throne, at Marengo, at Waterloo, at St. Helena; and even at this day, lying dead under the dome of the Hôtel des Invalides, there is a sublimity about his very ashes. Again, Galileo and Columbus—whether they appear as the triumphant discoverers of new worlds or, maligned and persecuted, lie in the gloom of dungeons—possess the power to move us. The noble in history appears at every page; but it will be remembered that in its portrayal the limitations of the arts must be observed. Painting depends upon pictorial features; and in these Cæsar, for instance, lying dead at the base of Pompey’s statue may be no better than a plebeian lying there; and, again,

Columbus in chains may possess no more sublimity than a common vagabond in chains. Historical painting is at best rather illustrative than purely creative; and if it would succeed it must catch the pictorial moment. This is not necessarily a moment of headlong action, but one that by its interest shall make the painting a picture in itself, quite independent of any historical text attached to it.

Another field of beauty, and one oftener chosen than any other by poet and painter, is that of the sublime in strength, power, action, life. Milton exhibits it very often, and in no instance better than in his description of Satan:

“ High on a throne . . . which far  
Outshone the wealth of Ormus and of Ind  
. . . Satan exalted sat,  
. . . . .  
Their dread commander; he, above the rest,  
In shape and gesture proudly eminent,  
Stood like a tower.”

The figure of the leader of the rebellious angels rises magnificent over all the hosts, the glare, the glitter, and the clash of hell. He is so lofty that all may see him; and we cannot choose but admire him for the sole quality of daring power. If we turn from this picture and bring up to mind the Moses of Michael Angelo, we shall have, with a different motive, its counterpart. Moses is half-turning with indignant strength, as though he would rise and crush the idolatrous children of Israel.\* He sits there, silent

---

\* Lübke.

and severe, yet suggestive of sudden action, and there is nothing in or about him but power. This is the one thought of the sculptor; its expression creates sublimity; and if the spectator fails to grasp it, he will see little more than a well-carved block of stone. This revelation of power is prominently stamped upon the face and figure; and the spectator may not turn aside to look for a garment askew, or a misshapen finger or muscle, any more than in the presence of Satan he would become inquisitive about a cloven foot. Michael Angelo never intended the chisel-marks on the statue to be examined; nor did Milton anticipate that the syllables of his verse would be counted. Look to the angry brow of Moses, the glittering front of Satan, and questions regarding petty details will not be asked.

Again, different attributes of power appear upon different brows. The Apollo Belvidere, whether the hand hold the ægis or the bow, has upon the face the beautiful scorn of a god who glories in the ease with which he conquers.\* Zeus and Athena overawe us with the majesty of their presence; while Heracles and the giant figures battling at Pergamus are splendid in their muscular power. The physical in woman is not often of a sublime nature, for it lacks force. Not even the Venus of the Louvre can aspire beyond simple beauty; and it is only when some other attribute comes in, as that of holiness in the Madonna, or colossal majesty as in the Pallas-Athena, that the

---

\* Winckelmann.

sublime is felt. Nor is the grand in the physical confined to man alone. The beast and, for poetry, even the bird, may possess it, though it is not easily expressed in art. The lion advancing in the arena or stooping to drink from the desert pool; the flying Arab horse; or that

“one black mighty steed  
Who seemed the patriarch of his breed,  
Without a single speck or hair  
Of white upon his shaggy side,”

who led the thousand of the wild untamed troop up the Ukraine steppes, are grand in their strength, and may well furnish subjects for the poet's and the painter's art.

One more instance of ideas of grandeur. It is not necessary that painting should illustrate either history or the poets. It is free to originate its own conceptions; and probably the greatest field for the display of these is that of human passion. There is scarcely a phase of love, hate, pride, joy, despair, agony, or fear that cannot be and has not been made truly great by the upholding throughout of the one idea. Shakspeare in literature has struck almost every note in the gamut; and Michael Angelo in painting, “in the passion and the prophecy of the vaults of the Sistine,” has equaled him in intensity if not in number. The pride of Lucifer, the despair of Manfred and Cain, the hatred of Iago, the love of Imogen, the agony of Lear, all have found their counterparts in the paintings of the great masters. Through-

out all art the passions have been a chief *motif* in production. They are used alike by genius and neophyte, and whether they produce great art or not is dependent upon the greatness of the conception and its expression.

In painting, then, sublimity consists in the revelation of an idea which of itself is sufficient to capture the eye and overcome the emotional nature. For its effect, in one sense, it is quite independent of form, since the sublime is not reached unless form can be forgotten or overlooked in the contemplation of the idea. The range of the creator and revealer of it is not limited in nature, save in exceptional cases. He may choose to take up the neglected stone at his doorway and by skillful treatment reveal to us a matchless diamond, or he may in unknown places seek newer and loftier beauties.

Next in the scale comes that art which shows but simple beauty. It consists of idea dependent upon form, or a union of both, as may be instanced in much of the painting of the Renaissance. That it is not so great as the former may be accounted for by its ideas being less grand, and by the importance given to form, which divides the attention and detracts from the chief aim. The harmony of form and thought produces in some respects a faultless, and in all respects a popular, art; and if it is not the greatest, it is for the reason we have just given. Too much prominence is allowed to form, which should not equal the idea. Thus Barry Cornwall wrote of the ocean:

"The sea ! the sea ! the open sea !  
The blue, the fresh, the ever free."

It is a rather clever idea; is set in a clever couplet, and makes clever poetry: but the couplet and its rhymes are too important, and the thought, which should be overwhelming, is dragged down to meet them. How different it is from Byron's address, in which the poet cared nothing for couplets, and even used questionable grammar to express the omnipotence of the ocean ! In subject this art of simple beauty is universal; and its producers, though not the great geniuses of the world, are nevertheless worthy of serious consideration. They are creators, discoverers, interpreters; and though they may be of lesser brilliancy, yet we value them highly, as we do Keats and Tennyson though they be not Shakspeare and Milton.

Below the harmonious art is that which may possess no clear-cut revelation of thought, but rather an unconscious or instinctive sentiment. This sentiment is usually called "poetic feeling," and has its origin in the peculiar manner in which the artist views nature, or in the effect which nature may produce upon him. It is but an unconscious idea, half expressed, or put forth as vaguely and shadowy as it is conceived. The difference between it and a clear conception may be well instanced in the work of Corot. His *Orpheus* conveys a distinct and predominant idea of light; while much of his other work, his *Ville d'Avrays* and *Fontainebleau* landscapes, possess only the sentiment of light. Again, *The Sower* by

Millet distinctly tells of the nobility of the peasant; while his shepherds and wood-choppers are only hints or suggestions of it. This poetic feeling is also well shown in the landscapes of Daubigny and Diaz, in the Oriental pieces of Decamps and Fromentin, and in the peasant-pictures of Bréton and Frère.

Next to this art comes that which is largely dependent for success upon technical skill, neither beauty of idea nor of form being predominantly strong. It is accompanied in many cases by what has been called "artistic feeling," displayed in the artist's manner of treatment; the peculiar style of expression conveying an idea not so much of the man or the individual as of the artist. The works of Fortuny and his school, and of Vollon, than whom a better technician never lived, are good examples of this class of art. Delacroix and Millet even in their poorer work have the artist's feeling for color; and Bouguereau, devoid of imagination, and a poor painter of flesh and draperies, possesses a feeling for line that Michael Angelo might have envied.

Last of all is that art dependent solely upon form. In its nature it is decorative, whether it be an "ideal" head or figure, an elaborate imitation of fruits or flowers, or a stupendous canvas of allegory or mountain-scenery. It is not likely to possess any of the artist's thought or feeling, and hence, aside from decoration, is nothing.

## CHAPTER III.

### OF SUBJECT.

THE three constituent elements of a picture are idea, subject or form, and expression. The idea is the thought to be conveyed; the subject is the vehicle of conveyance; and the expression is the manner in which it is conveyed. These three elements must unite and be appropriate to each other in order to produce great art; and though, of the three, perhaps subject is the least important, yet it may not be lightly overlooked or set aside. If we vary the image, it may be said to be the glass in which all ideas are mirrored, and their proper presentment to the eye is very much dependent upon the quality of the glass.

To men of originality, all subject or form, in all art, is likely to be more or less of a handicap. Thought is free, and in its untrammeled state is quite boundless in its scope. It wanders hither and thither at will, imagining the inimitable, viewing the sublime and the beautiful, and perceiving phantoms of splendor pass and repass, shapeless, formless, inexpressible. In that state it is ethereal, intangible, and in proportions grand as Aladdin's palace. But only seek to capture conception and pin it down to earth, try to bring it within the bounds of form, strive to clasp this beauty of the mind and place it in artistic shape, and what a change

takes place ! It suffers like the blue-winged butterfly of Cashmere:

“Every touch that wooed its stay  
Hath brushed its brightest hues away.”

The splendid idea of the poet fades into a feeble echo of itself when it is constrained in verse, and the painter's vision of beauty is dissipated by the face peering out of the canvas. The artist longs to embody his idea in expression, yet cannot fully illumine his art with the “lightning of the mind” because the mold of form limits and checks the thought. Yet there is no other way to express ideas; and possibly not a little of the constraint which form entails is laid upon the artist by his own choice. To the minds of the unthinking, on the other hand, it is oftentimes an advantage, as an aid to thought and a suggester of ideas. Some men there are with ideas like molten metal, that overrun the mold; and others, again, cold and dull, scarce eke out the necessary quantity. Yet form is not Procrustean in its nature; on the contrary, it is pliable and adaptable to circumstances, and much of the painter's art lies in his knowing what forms to choose, and how to bend them to his will after they have been chosen. Art is truly but “a fine frenzy;” yet in the very torrent and whirlwind of passion the artist must beget a temperance born of good judgment, and select for purposes of illustration forms not only appropriate, but familiar and comprehensible to his audience.

It is a studio-belief of some of our modern artists, especially those of France and Germany and the followers of Fortuny and the Spanish-Roman school, that the subject of a painting is of very little consequence; that it makes little difference what you paint if you but paint it well. Almost anything will do, from a pumpkin, a brass pot, and a suit of armor to a bric-à-brac shop or a group of society women in a French drawing-room. This is but another phase of the argument put forth by the believers in technical skill as the aim of art, which we have attempted to confute, some pages back. If painters have nothing to say, perhaps they may as well gossip about gems, bronzes, cutlery, china, and millinery goods as about sunlight and cloud-form and human passion. In either case it is but a tale of the paint-brush and need not attract our attention. But if they have ideas to express, they would better place them in appropriate and intelligible forms. If their subject is bad, there will of necessity be an obscurity, perhaps a total loss, of the thought, and then the picture becomes dependent upon skill of hand, which, we have seen, is not sufficient in itself to make great art.

It seems to be a generally recognized requisite of a painting that it must have some beauty about it; and the painters who believe not wholly in expression, and have not sufficient wit to originate ideas, oftentimes hit upon beauty of form and color, thinking thereby to conform to the æsthetic creed. This latter generally takes the shape of the "ideal" of which we have spoken; and for the sayer of nothing,

again, perhaps it is well that he chooses it, for it is better to say that nothing agreeably than disagreeably. The half shop-girl, half Greek goddess, which passes for an "ideal" is much to be preferred to the dressed pig's-head of the "realist" who has neither good thought nor good subject and yet thrusts expression at us in repulsive form. The simperings of the foolish may be endurable, even amusing; but the howl of the mad is unbearable. This beauty of face and figure, however, is not at all necessary in painting notwithstanding Raphael used it. His success, artistically, is not attributable to it, though it may be admitted that much of his popularity among the masses is due to it. If he were a great artist by virtue of this alone, then Carlo Dolci and the hundred other insipid followers of the Renaissance might claim greatness on the same ground, for their beauty-patterns were cut from similar cloth. In portraying ideas or strong feeling, skin-deep beauty may be entirely discarded, and the uncouth, wrinkled faces of Rembrandt, or even the repulsiveness of the demons of the Last Judgment, substituted in its place, if necessary. Michael Angelo despised it, for he found it characterless. More thought could be shown in sterner figures; and to him rugged power, not smooth polish, constituted beauty. To express strength he singled out his subjects with the greatest care and with special regard to their fitness. The Sibyls and Prophets of the Sistine are confirmations of this. In modern art, beauty of form, like the school-boy's laugh, generally betrays "the vacant mind." We do not find it used

very much by the leaders. Delacroix and Millet may have turned their brushes upon Hebe-faced studio-models, and Decamps and Fromentin may have painted the seven gazelle-eyed houris of the Prophet's paradise; but we have no record of such canvases. On the contrary, their art shows how poorly a fair exterior could translate their thoughts, and how perfectly in the crucible of the mind the common ore of humanity may be transformed into shining beauty.

An idea is like a gem : it requires a setting in proportion to its size and brilliancy. Its light must not be hidden by dingy surroundings; but if it would be well shown it must be well set. The latter must be appropriate and accommodate itself to the former. The necessity of this, and how it has been recognized in the past, may be illustrated by examples from the arts analogous to painting. Thus Shakspeare chooses Macbeth for ideas of ambition ; Lear for suffering under ingratitude; Romeo and Juliet for love; Richard for treachery; and Queen Katherine for insulted dignity. It will be remembered that these characters are not people brought into being by the imagination of Shakspeare alone, though his art has of course given them great prominence. He did not find them in the remote regions of fancy, but in the pages of history; for they were historic figures, remarkable for the qualities mentioned, before Shakspeare's day. Strange—is it not?—that out of all creation he should have chosen these characters ! Yet are they not well fitted for their respective purposes, and does not each one admirably embody the peculiar thought of the dramatist?

How ill each could set forth the other's thoughts ! Richard could not be Romeo, nor Romeo, Lear; for in either case the conception and the character are indissoluble, and the deed and the doer of it are complementary to each other. The hand of the master-workman is apparent in the setting of each gem ; and instead of the form detracting from the thought, there is a unity and a harmony without an equality—a perfect chord, yet a difference in pitch.

Take an antithetical instance. In these modern times there are many who believe that Browning stands next to Shakspeare in dramatic art; yet if we turn to his *Blot in the 'Scutcheon* we shall find Gerard the Warrener acting like a servant, while talking as good English upon as learned themes as the elegant Earl Mertoun or Lord Tresham. In *Pippa Passes*, the girl Pippa is a hand in the silk-mills; yet she discourses like a De Staël, theorizes, speculates, and poetizes. Byron, again, in his choice of characters is quite as infelicitous as Browning. His Cain is a nineteenth-century skeptic instead of the untutored first-born of earth, and his Childe Harold, Corsair, Mazeppa, and Sardanapalus are all brothers of the same mind and stature. His contemporaries Southey, Coleridge, and Landor are even less successful. In the works of these men we find no lack of gems of thought, but unfortunately they have but one setting for them all. It has been the critics' grievance against Byron from the beginning that he could draw but one character (subject); they never said he had but one *idea*.

A similar analogy is apparent in dramatic representation. Every prominent actor of to-day has a *repertoire* of plays almost entirely drawn from the drama of the past because the present playwrights are not happy in their subjects; and the cause of a skillful actor's success in one *rôle* and his failure in another is not to be accounted for so much by his own variation in acting as by the difference in the character (subject) which he attempts to portray.

This reasoning holds true, again, of the novel, into which I need not go more than to cite the people of Dickens and George Eliot as examples of forms appropriate to the thoughts set forth.

In a broader sense, taking not individual character but a work of art in its entirety, there is a likeness between great poems and great paintings in that they both fix upon the loftiest subjects—subjects proportionate to the ideas expressed. Pentaour the Egyptian chose no ordinary man to be the hero of his pæan of praise. He took the Pharaoh descended from the sun-god, the very highest of earth. The Egyptian sculptors did likewise by making their most colossal statues in the image of the king. In Assyria the themes of the poet and the sculptor were similar to those of Egypt: and in Greece Homer and the Hesiodic bards dealt principally with the gods and demi-gods; and if they descended to men, these were ever of the heroic mold of Achilles and Ulysses. The Greek sculptors followed the poets step by step. Above all others these latter were most particular regarding the forms they chose, and

in the Periclean days of sculpture none but the gods or national heroes ever became their models. Again, in more modern times, Milton, in portraying power, foiled wrath, and baffled pride, stopped not to deal with men and their rulers, but sought the very highest exponents in the persons of the rebellious angels. Michael Angelo chose the Last Judgment for a similar purpose. Throughout all branches of art sublime ideas are marked by the greatness of the subject in which they are displayed. Architecture finds its most exalted expression in the cathedral, not in the prison; music reaches the height of its power in such dramatic themes as "Tristan and Isolde," "The Nibelungen Ring," and "Tannhäuser"—pieces taken from the European legends of heroic days; striking and startling events of history or of human passion become the themes of great dramas; and poetry in the superlative degree is found in the epics that have to do with events of mythological, supernatural, or historic origin, as instanced in the *Iliad*, the *Aeneid*, the *Divine Comedy*, *Jerusalem Delivered*, *Paradise Lost*, and *Faust*. The counterpart of this is found in plastic and pictorial art. The gods and demi-gods have presided over sculpture, while the Crucifixions, the Annunciations, the Last Judgments, have displayed the genius of the painters. If successful example may be accepted as a precedent, this would seem to prove that great ideas demand subjects proportionately great, and ideas of lesser power subjects proportionately less; that the thoughts of a man need only the ordinary expression

of humanity, but the thoughts of a god the form and language of deity ; that ordinary people may die and be buried like ordinary people, but that an Elijah requires to be translated to heaven in a chariot of fire.

And finally we reach the much-mooted question, Should painting confine itself to picturing subjects of the present time, or is it at liberty to go back into the past? Writers without number, from Goethe onward, have repeated the injunction: "Paint what you see, and paint in the living present; let your art be indigenous and reflect the spirit of the time."\* And this in substance is precisely what all art of any consequence has done from the days of Primitive Man to the present time. It is ever a reflection of the age in which it lives, though in being that, it is not essential that English painting, for instance, should represent the glories of the reigning Queen, as the Laureate attempts to do in verse; or that American painting should be made up of scenes in the New York Stock Exchange, or buffalo-hunts and Indian life, on the Western plains. If he is national in spirit, the English artist will be essentially English in thought, and the American essentially American; but it is not necessary that their subjects should be respectively located in their own countries, or that they should be of this century. That of which a

---

\* Mr. William M. Hunt put it more violently thus : "Paint what you see and what you feel, if it's nothing but a cat."—*Talks about Art.*

man speaks does not determine his nationality, but rather his individual thoughts and his manner of expressing them. Shakspeare was emphatically English and reflected the Elizabethan age notwithstanding he wrote of Pericles, Cæsar, Antony and Cleopatra—people of foreign lands who died long before his date. Racine was French although he wrote *Alexandre*, *Bajazet*, and *Phèdre*. And Lessing was German if he chose not his own time or country in the drama of *Nathan der Weise*. This is apparent, again, in sculpture and painting. Phidias was typically Greek though he chiseled the forms of the old and the unseen gods; Michael Angelo was Italian, and his art was a perfect mirror of the Renaissance in spite of such characters as Moses, David, the Prophets, and the Sibyls; and Holbein, Dürer, Rubens, and Rembrandt could not possibly conceal their national affinities, no matter what their themes or how far back in history or mythology they were placed. It may be safely said that there is no positive requirement of art that its subject should be adapted to the country and age of the artist, and the mere fact that the subjects of the greatest masterpieces have been located in past time and in lands foreign to the painters would seem to indicate that there is something absolutely unfavorable about the present event.

This modern demand of the critics that art shall picture the existing facts has not been raised in regard to painting alone. The poem and the novel have likewise been hawked at despite the fact that both the poet and the novelist expressly show by

their seeking antiquity that they know that to be their proper sphere of action. But the modern critic from his scientific point of view cannot see why the steam-engine, the electric telegraph, a drop of water under a microscope, or a strike of factory-hands will not make a good poem ; nor why modern society, political history of the times, or fashionable love-making will not make a strong novel. He thinks them possessed of the elements of strength and beauty, and so perhaps they are: and so is the picture called "The Night-Prowlers," by Munkacsy; but if this canvas were placed within two feet of the critic's face he would see neither strength nor beauty—nothing but sprawling legs and muddy paint. Close-ness is a cause of false sight or no sight quite as often as distance; and this is precisely the difficulty with current events for the purposes of art. They are too new, too crude, too near. There is no perspective, no unity, no romance, no spirit—nothing save gross form and harsh outline. It takes duration to mold facts and give them that proper rotundity which they are destined to hold in history. Time, again, is a great sifter of the wheat from the chaff. It separates the salient points from the mass of detail, and makes them more prominent by the suppression of unimportant surroundings. At first sight all is more or less hard and mechanical, as are the happenings of our every-day life. The written history of our times is generally a mere dictionary of indiscriminate facts. But the years at last set all things in related positions, and events find their proper estimate and

importance in our minds, as do the lives and characters of great men. It is a stereotyped remark of the historian that we are not far enough removed from certain matters to speak of them justly; and a judgment upon a present occurrence or a living man is often found to be one-sided and almost worthless. Under similar circumstances something akin to this mental nearsightedness creates a false focus in the vision of the poet and the novelist. The world has yet to see and read the great poems that have been founded upon occurrences contemporary with the poet. There are, to be sure, some exceptions, and among these may be cited the description of the night before Waterloo in *Childe Harold*; yet over this same subject Scott, Southey, and a host of the less notable stumbled and fell, as in past times Lucan did over *Pharsalia*.

Possibly no one could speak with greater authority on this subject than he who as an author encountered all its difficulties—Hawthorne. I quote from the preface to the *Marble Faun*: “No author without a trial can conceive of the difficulty of writing a romance about a country where there is no shadow, no antiquity, no mystery, no picturesque and gloomy wrong, nor anything but a commonplace prosperity in broad and simple daylight, as is happily the case with my dear native land. It will be very long, I trust, before romance-writers may find congenial and easily-handled themes either in the annals of our stalwart republic or in any characteristic and probable events of our individual lives. Romance and poetry,

ivy, lichens, and wall-flowers, need ruin to make them grow." This, in a lesser degree, is the case with painting. It is a product of age, and dependent upon it to a certain extent. An idea in any department of knowledge first appears to us in irregular outline. It lacks uniformity and has no high lights or shadows; but if allowed time to develop, it eventually shapes itself. The startling incidents of to-day appear in vivid colorings and distorted proportions, but the to-morrows tone them down into poetic and artistic objects of history. When looked back upon through the years, or even the centuries, they will have lost all their crudeness and detail, and only the strong leading features of form and color, which by reason of their strength and truth are best fitted to survive, will remain. It is these features thus rounded, emphasized, and refined by time that the poet and the painter take up and transfix in verse and upon canvas; and their doing so is a mark of genius which never slaves over the commonplace to produce the poetic. Such was the motive that actuated men like Dante and Tasso, Michael Angelo and Raphael—men modern in thought—to overlook the history of their day and seek out subjects in the past. Perhaps it was not necessary for them to have done so, and it may as well be frankly admitted that in painting there have been many fine pieces both in ideas and subjects produced in the living present; nevertheless, the masters, with few exceptions, discarded their own age and went back to former times, and it is safe to say there was some very good reason for their doing so.

## CHAPTER IV.

### OF EXPRESSION.

IT is not my purpose to deal with the practical side of expression in painting, or to treat of those various features, such as chiar-oscuro, perspective, and drawing, which have to do with its accomplishment. Such consideration would belong more properly to a treatise on *technique*, and would be valuable only when coming from a professional artist like Fromentin or Couture. In glancing at art in theory we can but outline the principle which dominates the production of strong and effective work. This principle must have been premised from the preceding pages to be the concentration of force, and such it is. In its action it requires the utilization of all means for the accomplishment of a certain end; the bending of every energy for the attainment of a definite purpose; the concentration of all force into one coigne of vantage. The same law, or its analogy at least, is demonstrated in all the workings of nature, is practically applied in all physics and mechanics, and is well known in every department of philosophical and scientific thought. I shall attempt to show that it is a necessity in the production of art.

A logician who wishes to prove by argument a conclusion in any branch of knowledge sets about it

in a logical manner. He makes that which he seeks to prove represent the hub of a wheel ; the premises from which the proof may be drawn are represented by the outer rim of the wheel ; and the various points of proof brought into play are shown by the spokes, which, proceeding from the outer rim of thought, center in the conclusion, or the hub. One after another these points are brought up into position until the desired end is reached, and the argument is completed by the concentration of force upon one point which sustains and is itself sustained.

The novelist who gathers together a series of scenes and puts them together in the shape of a novel generally does so with some well-known purpose in view. This is oftentimes supposed to be the pointing of a moral ; but whether the purpose be this or something entirely different, the means and manner of attaining it remain the same. A hero, a heroine, or both, are the chief exponents of the purpose. They are the central planets in the novelist's system, and all other characters are but satellites. These latter revolve about the former; and if they possess any luster, it is but a reflected light. Arthur Donnithorne is but a foil to receive the righteous rage of Adam Bede; and all the fanaticism of early Christianity in Alexandria is but a background upon which to show the Neo-Platonism of Hypatia. Thus a novel like *My Novel* follows through plot and counterplot the lives and fortunes of many people to prove that knowledge is power, but a power like a two-edged sword which may cut the holder's hand; and how admirably arranged in the

order of their strength do these people come ! The two friends Harley L'Estrange and Audley Edgerton are the principal characters; and around them, as the tennis-balls to the players, to vary the metaphor, are such people as Leslie, the Avenels, Dale, Riccabocca, Leonard Fairfield, and Violante, who serve merely to display the skill of the contestants. The aim of the book is to prove the truth of a certain idea; and people, scenes, plots, and descriptions are but the means of its attainment.

The handling of characters with the object of producing certain effects can perhaps be better illustrated in the drama. Here the law of culminating strength is well known, and has the name of "dramatic force." There is always an idea to be expressed, a something to be proved, a virtue to be exalted, or a frailty to be debased. In proving or showing these the dramatist uses people as a juggler does puppets. He makes them talk to suit his wishes, and assigns to each a given part according to its importance. From the beginning the tendency of the piece is onward; each scene unfolds something of the plot and has a climax; each act has a climax ; and the whole piece has one immediately after which the drama closes, the purpose of it presumably having been accomplished. The characters are but points of proof, tending toward conviction or confirmation of what the playwright chooses to set forth. Yet even in these, like the scene within the act, and the act within the play, each is constructed with a regard to effect and upon the true principle

of concentrated power. Thus, for instance, Schiller with *Mary Stuart*, and Shelley with *Beatrice Cenci*, are very careful not to bring in the commonplace details of history. That in fact these heroines went through a routine of daily life not different from ordinary existence, even at the height of their misfortunes, is most certain; but the dramatists do not choose to refer to these minor matters, because they lend not directly to the strength of the characters, but rather undermine and detract from them. Every person in the drama is put forth as the exponent of a certain purpose great or small, and there is still another purpose in the position occupied by the chief characters among the minor ones. Each of the latter is built up in itself and forms a block of the pyramid that raises aloft the hero or heroine. In the play, *Mary Stuart*, though dethroned, imprisoned, and condemned to death, is greater than the sovereign Queen Elizabeth; none of those surrounding her equals her in importance. And this is true art; for she is the center of interest, and it is the place of the lesser to pay deference to the greater and thus heighten the effect. The figures possess a certain proportionate value, as do pawns, knights, bishops, and kings in a game of chess. In *The Cenci*, Beatrice is as much above her mother as the latter is above either of the murderers; and it is the proper maintenance of these positions that makes up the strength of the play.

Again, this can be further exhibited in stage presentation. Hamlet, for example, is the central figure, and almost always occupies the middle of the stage.

If there are other people upon the boards, they are placed in the order of their importance. The supernumeraries, courtiers, pages, and waiting-ladies are at the back; Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, a little more to the front; Horatio, still nearer; the Queen, King, and Ophelia, nearly central; and lastly Hamlet, the center of the group, "the observed of all observers." Whatever change there may be in the scene, these characters maintain their relative positions; and the homage paid to Hamlet by all of them tends to make him the leading person of the play.

A final example of this concentration of force may be taken from poetry. Here, again, some controlling purpose takes possession of the poet's mind and rules throughout the poem, be it epic in twenty-four books or lyric in twenty-four lines. It may be the power of heroism, as in the *Iliad*; the passion of sorrow, as in *In Memoriam*; or the note of sad regret, as in *The Dream*. In any case, the purpose of the piece is sustained throughout, and it is the object of the poet to bend all forces to the expression of it. His mind is but a mirror reflecting in multiplied images different aspects of the same thing. Again and again the glass is turned upon the conception, viewing it in new lights and positions, until at last we comprehend it, and the object of the poet is attained. As in the drama, so the poem is produced not alone by sequential force in the whole, but also in the parts, and each part moves and holds position in the order of its strength. Whatever does not tend to strengthen must of necessity weaken; and the introduction of material that has no direct or

relative effect on the whole is bad art in any department. In the poem all that is commonplace is omitted; much that is prosaic and yet necessary for the sake of comprehension is but faintly suggested; and all that is highly poetical or brilliant is set forth with a strength proportionately greater on account of the absence of detracting features. Oftentimes the omission of the unpoetic leaves of the poem but a string of flashing gems held together by the slightest thread of narrative; for if detail is introduced, it is with an expenditure of strength; and if too much is brought in, the whole is dragged down to the commonplace. This is well instance in such poems as *Christabel* and *The Giaour*, where even coherence is dependent at times upon the reader's imagination. Thus concentration of force in the argument requires the elimination of all that is not logical; in the drama it requires the elimination of all that is not dramatic; in the acting, all that is not histrionic; in the poem, all that is not poetic. And now it remains to be shown that the same reasoning holds true of painting, and that the production of strong art requires that all that is not artistic and pictorial shall be discarded, and that only shall be retained which means something in the expression of an idea.\*

---

\* "A work should be all of a piece, and people and things should be there for an end. I wish to put strongly and fully all that is necessary; so much so that I think things weakly said had better not be said at all, because they are in a manner deflowered and spoiled; but I profess the greatest horror of uselessness (however brilliant) and filling up. Such things can have no result but to take

It may be premised from what has already been said that it is not the province of a picture to convey more than one idea; nor has it ever been so claimed, except possibly by Mr. Ruskin. Two or more ideas could not live in the same picture, any more than two suns could be brilliant in the same sky. One would dim the splendor of the other, and both would suffer. Moreover, the following of different lines of thought in a picture would be as confusing to the spectator as hearing, or trying to hear, two operas at one time. Raphael's "Transfiguration" is a good example of this. Given the one idea, then, the means of its expression in painting are, generally speaking, two—form and color (chiar-oscuro and perspective being assumed for the sake of argument as but modifications of these). Like the characters of a play, a novel, or a poem, these means have certain proportionate values, which must of necessity be maintained in the forcible expression of the idea. They may be called color-values and form- or object-values.

Every successful picture has a certain predominant color which corresponds to the key of a melody of music, and all the notes of the color-gamut must be in harmony with it. Each note has its proportionate value to the key-note, precisely as in the drama Bernardo, Horatio, and the Queen hold relative places of importance toward Hamlet. Some examples will illustrate our meaning at the start, not only as regards

---

off the attention and weaken the whole."—Millet to Pelloquet, in Sensier's *Jean François Millet*.

the color-pitch, but pure light as well. In sunset effects the high light is the sun itself; next it is a halo; after that comes a half-tint; and so on, lessening in value as the radiation continues, until at last it fades off into shade or darkness.\* In a similar position of relative value to the high color may radiate all the colors of the spectrum and their thousand tints and shades. Gold, crimson, scarlet, blue, purple, may all appear, provided they hold their proper positions. But place one light too high or too low, or one hue or tint amiss; let a lackey stand in a nobleman's place; strike a false note in the gamut, and instantly there is discord and the effect is perhaps destroyed. Not only must the harmony of a sunset be maintained by the use of tints, and gradations of light proportionate to the sun itself, but the various positions of these tints and lights and shades must be maintained. The sky will be the chief exponent, the water next, and the earth next. Therefore, as regards their values, the sun is greater than the sky, the sky greater than the water, the water greater than the earth; and any brilliancy of tone or degree of light placed upon the last that outvalues that of the first is not in harmony, is not true in value, is not in proportion, is not strengthening but weakening, and, hence, bad art. This on the supposition, of course,

---

\* "There must be a principal light; all the others should be subordinate to it, and should become fainter toward the extremities of the canvas. The same principle holds good in shadows, but in an inverse way; that is to say, that the strong values ought to lessen in approaching the center."—Couture, *Conversations on Art*.

that the idea which the painter wishes to express is regarding the sun. If it primarily concerns the earth, then let him heighten the coloration there and depress the light of the sun and sky by partly concealing the former behind a cloud or taking it out of the canvas altogether.

Again, in the paintings of Oriental life, caravans, street-scenes, groups in interiors, or court-squares with horses, where warmth and complexion are the chief attraction, there will generally be found some leading color with which all the other shades and tints will be in keeping. The key in which the composition is pitched can be told at a glance by the general appearance of the whole. Should the picture be bad by a lack of gradation, it will appear much after the manner of a modern patch-work quilt, where pieces are put in at haphazard; but if, on the contrary, it be good by the subordination of tints and semi-tints to the prevailing color, it will be harmonious and pleasing to the eye. When this predominant color so harmonizes and amalgamates the others that, if the canvas were placed upon a swiftly-revolving pin, the colors would blend into one uniform tint, then the picture is technically said to be "good in tone." The degree of color, whether subdued or high, is immaterial, provided the "tone" or uniformity of it be kept up in proportion. The chief color prevailing in figure-compositions, as in landscape, usually radiates from the center of interest as the light of the sun goes out to all points through the heavens. The minor tones are generally blended off into tints and semi-tints, or lost

in neutrality; but the value of each, whether it be great or small, is maintained throughout for the support of the whole. There is but one commander of an army; but there are generals, colonels, lieutenants, and privates, increasing in number as the rank grows less; yet each has his position and relation to the commander, and each works for the maintenance of the united force.\* The application of this principle may be made to all kinds of painting,—landscape, figure-compositions, portraits, or still-life,—and to almost all of the works of the great colorists, Titian, Tintoretto, Velasquez, Rubens, Turner. It will not always apply to the works of Raphael, Leonardo, or Michael Angelo; for, heretical as it may be to say, they were not remarkable for color, except in some instances for its badness.

Of the exaggeration and distortion of lights and tones as they appear in nature, for the purpose of producing effects in art, something will be said under the head of form- or object-values, of which we have

---

\* “Take for example his [Correggio’s] picture of Antiope. The woman, enveloped in a panther-skin, is as bright as a flame. The soft red tone forms the first halo; then the light blue draperies with a slight greenish tint form the second halo. The Satyr has a value a few degrees below that of the draperies, making it the third halo. When the bouquet is thus formed, Correggio surrounds it with beautiful dark leaves, shading toward the extremities of the canvas. These gradations are so well observed that if you put the picture at so great a distance that you cannot see the figures, you will still have the effect of light.”—Couture, *Conversations on Art*.

next to speak. That it has been done successfully by genius the history of art will prove ; but it would seem to be a bad rule of action for mediocrity to follow. That it is open to the popular objection of not being "natural," and that it does not reproduce nature, or even the truth of it, is very true. But we have already learned that nature is one thing and art is another ; and as for truth, there are many kinds of it. For instance, there is a truth of nature which rules nature, a truth of history ruling history, and a truth of art for art. Few pictures have been painted that in conforming to one of these truths have not in some degree transgressed another. There never has been a Christ or a Madonna painted by either an old or a young master that was not false to history. What, then, shall we do—cast them all aside ? Titian and Michael Angelo at times falsified not only history, but nature. Often they did not even maintain Mr. Ruskin's "generic truth." But one thing they did maintain, and that is truth to art. These transgressions are scarcely defensible ; yet primarily the separate departments of knowledge would better be ruled by their different laws. This judging and gibbetting of one because not like the other smacks something too much of the Crusade manner of hanging a Mohammedan because not a Christian.

The general sources from which painting derives its constituent elements are but two : the human mind, which produces the conception, and nature, which furnishes the materials. The first has been spoken of ; and regarding the second, we will not now take

up anew the argument whether the forms of nature shall be reproduced literally or not. Words are but the forms of a language, yet we do not hesitate to take and use them in any way we choose. The clay is a natural form, yet the hand of the potter molds it to his fancy. And so it is the province of the artist to use and mold objects in nature in the manner he thinks best for the expression of his ideas. They are but the materials of his work, and in themselves are merely facts as uninteresting as are words, or potter's clay. It is the use to which he puts them, the meaning that he gives them, that may elevate them as the signs and symbols of ideas. Facts reproduced remain simply facts. An imitation conveys no more meaning than an original. If people see no beauty in the latter, how can they hope to see it in the former? The presence of an interpreter is necessary. In its natural state the splendor of the diamond is not visible; but the lapidist has an art of bringing light out of darkness. He chips away the outside crust, and the reflected luster becomes apparent. And this is the way the painter and the poet in the field of nature bring forth her greater beauties and her deeper meanings—by doing away with concealing features, and concentrating the attention upon one sole idea which scintillates like a gem of many facets.

The facts of nature, then, are to the artist as building materials to the mechanic—means out of which, if properly constructed, something may be made. The first movement is that of selection, for all

forms of nature are not fitted or advantageous for use upon canvas. There are always one or more objects of greater importance than the others as conveyers of ideas, or the embodiments of ideas in themselves ; these are first selected, and accessory objects that may be used as reflectors to enhance the brilliancy of the more prominent ones come next in order. After this has been accomplished follows the grouping of the different forms ; and the manner in which this has been done by the great painters gives us the principle upon which we are building: that the chief object has first place, and the lesser ones hold position according to their value. Features of small importance are merely suggested; and all forms that have no direct bearing upon the idea, or that do not contribute their quota of strength toward its effectiveness, are given no place whatever. Unnecessary detail is avoided, not only for effect in forcibly conveying the idea,\* but for the sake of simplicity in treatment. It is inimical to a broad style, and beauty of outline, mass, and color require its incessant sacrifice.† The object which is the chief impersonator of the idea has the greatest splendor, as the moon has more light than the stars and the outspread ocean. The others have brilliancy in the ratio of their importance in a descending scale ; but the light of no accessory equals that of the principal, except by detracting from the latter.

\* "If you want to make an impression you must sacrifice as many details as possible."—Wm. M. Hunt, *Talks on Art.*

† Couture.

In any one of the many pictures of the Last Supper the figure of Christ is always central in position, light, and color. By His side is the beloved John, and along the table are seated the disciples in the order of their relation to the Master, until at the extreme end Judas is dimly seen with half-averted face or else passing hurriedly out at the door. Such grouping is in perfect accord with the proper preservation of object- and color-values; and whether or not this was the position of things as the scene occurred is a matter of indifference. It is necessary that it should be so in art. Another instance may be taken from the pictures of the Crucifixion. The Christ is always the primary object to which everything else is contributory. At His feet, and closest to Him, is the Holy Mother; beside her is the Magdalene; next, the two thieves, one on each side, toned down in light and color to be in keeping; farther removed stand the Roman soldiers, indifferently expressed; and in the distance are dull, dark clouds and mountains, so dim as to blend with the neutral ground. Again, in the Rubens pictures, at the Louvre, Marie de Medici is always in the center, well brought out and well maintained; Henry IV. is of medium value only; while the gods and goddesses at the sides and back are blurred and dim.\* Fromentin claimed this as a proof that Rubens never could paint anything that he had not directly before him, and that the accessories were indistinct because the artist never saw them;

---

\* Hamerton, *Thoughts about Art.*

but this would seem to be a mistake. Rubens saw the *models* plainly enough; but in the picture he did not wish them to appear prominently. This same process of dramatic composition in painting may be seen again, in any one of the Descents from the Cross, in the pictures of the Madonna, in Michael Angelo's "Last Judgment," in Raphael's "St. Cecilia," in Correggio's "St. Jerome," in the pediment groups of the Parthenon, and in the stone group of Laokoön and his sons. In recent American art a good illustration may be found in the "Niagara" of Mr. Inness, where the object of the painter seems to be to display the beauty of falling water. Every feature of the picture, earth, air, sky, and cloud, leads up to where the torrent breaks in its descent, as though the draught of it drew them in like a whirlpool. Another example is the "Life Line" of Mr. Homer exhibited at the National Academy of Design in New York in the spring of 1884. The scene is the hollow of an enormous sea, where the view is shut in by two walls of gray water. At one side a remnant of flapping canvas indicates a ship, and through the mist in the distance is faintly seen a scrap of a rocky coast. Suspended above the water, in a sea-chair attached by pulley-ropes to the life-line above, are two figures, a life-saving-service man, and a half-drowned young girl lying unconscious in his arms. The interest, of course, is in the figures, and chiefly in the girl. To intensify and increase this interest in her, the painter has not shown the face of the man at all. A gust of wind has blown a woolen muffler or tippet directly

across his face, so that only a portion of his figure and the top of his hat are seen. Many have regarded this as a piece of studio cleverness to avoid the labor of painting in a second head; but, I think, wrongly. It is a perfect piece of art, wrought out for the express purpose of preserving the value of the girl as a principal, at the expense of the man as an accessory.

The importance of some objects over others in a canvas is recognized to a great extent by all painters in all kinds of painting. In portraiture the draperies, furniture, dress, and even parts of the figure, such as the hands, feet, ears, and sides of the neck, will not have so much skill expended upon them as the leading features, the hair, eyes, nose, cheeks, and chin.\* And if we examine a picture of a studio-interior (a not uncommon subject nowadays), we shall find that color- and object-values have been so studied and weighed that a blue-green vase will manage to balance a red curtain, and a statuette or cast in the corner will not have so much prominence as the painter himself seated in the middle of the room at his easel. Again, in a battle-piece the soldiers at the sides and at the back are inferior in every respect to those in the central foreground; and this is so because the artist, consciously or unconsciously, recognizes the cardinal value of certain objects above others of secondary worth. And this leads us to the further con-

---

\* "That's the difficulty about portrait-painting—to give the draperies character and fitness and keep them subservient to the head."—Wm. M. Hunt.

sideration of the suppression or mere suggestion of details in a picture, and of the exaggeration of the leading parts.

The cuttlefish is supposed to have the ability of beclouding the water about him and in the darkness of it escaping from his enemies. Many a writer (especially if of German extraction and writing on æsthetics) has a similar though less happy ability of so befogging his ideas with a cloud of words that his readers are bewildered and lose the point at issue. This may happen to the painter if he deal extensively in elaborated details; for too much gold, silver, and precious stones upon the royal robes will distract the attention from the king himself. There can be but one idea in a picture; and over-importance given to an inferior feature makes of that a second idea. Confusion is the immediate result; for whatever does not add to the chief conception detracts from it. Hence we cannot wholly believe with the one Slade professor (Mr. Ruskin) that that "art is greatest which conveys to the mind of the spectator by any means whatsoever the greatest number of the greatest ideas;" while, on the contrary, we may entirely agree with the other Slade professor (Mr. Wyatt) that nothing appears "more tedious and to be regretted than to see an artist of real genius wasting his time in expressing by laborious imitation objects of entirely secondary importance on portions of a picture upon which it is far better that the attention of the spectator should not be concentrated." Simplicity, not complexity,

is an attribute of all genius; and the fewer forms the painter can use, the purer will be his art, and the stronger it will appear. Moreover, the attainment of great ends with slight means is always a matter of admiration with us, for it raises the idea of power in the producer. We appreciate that which is done strongly yet easily; while the greatness which consists in the elaboration of little things is always a mark of weakness. If detail means nothing, it should be suppressed entirely; and this may be done in full sympathy with the "true to nature" doctrine, for atmosphere and point of view at the painter's will may make possible distinctness, faintness, or obliteration. If it is of contributory value and nothing more, it should simply be suggested.

And this power of suggestion is greater in every branch of art than is generally supposed. The simple carol of a bird falling upon the ear of the prisoner in the dungeon of Chillon "said a thousand things" of beauty, and brought back his mind from madness. A flower to the bed-ridden invalid is an instantaneous reminder of the warm days of spring, the trees, the meadows, and the soft south wind

"That breathes upon a bank of violets,  
Stealing and giving odor."

In *Our Mutual Friend* the brief description of Rogue Riderhood as he stands in the doorway of the lawyer's office to give evidence against Gaffer, rubbing with uneasy hand an old fur cap against the grain, tells the man and his character better than a chapter of

words. And so it is in painting that often a dim outline, a blur upon the canvas, or a shade of color, may contain more meaning than much finely wrought work. Moreover, the suggestion does not detract from more important things, while the elaboration most certainly would. This suggestiveness may correspond to Mr. Ruskin's generic truth; and his example of the painting of the form of a leaf without detailing the veins and stems of it is a good instance in hand. It is truth, but not the whole truth: rather, a line, a shade, a mass, which the eye may grasp and fill out by the aid of the imagination. If we look at an object ahead of us, we are not blind to objects on either side of us, but these latter are apparently blurred. We see them indistinctly, yet there is enough about them to suggest what they really may be. Painting reproduces upon flat surface, not things themselves, but their appearance; and it may be safely assumed that what has been called the "blotesque" style of painting is not very far from the *apparently* real state of things. Suppose ourselves to be actually watching from a neighboring field the rhythmic motion of The Sower; suppose our eyes focused upon him (as they would be): should we see clearly the distant hill, the wagon, and the streaked sky, or should we see them dimly and suggestively as Millet has painted them? The painter is true to appearances, and presents nature subjectively, not objectively—as it is seen by him, not as it is in reality. Every picture, whether in art or in nature, has what may be called its sun—that point of interest where the sight

is focused and where all values are concentrated; and to distribute the attention by giving as much importance to cleavages of rock and to leaves of trees as to sunsets and cloud-effects is not true to our observation of nature, and is false to every principle of art. They are of minor consequence in the one, and should be so in the other. Suggestiveness presented to the beholder's imagination will give them the place they are entitled to without depreciating from others of higher position.

Special emphasis or accent laid upon the chief objects in a picture by the suppression or mere suggestion of minor features is perfectly true to nature *as we see it*, and not only legitimate, but indispensable in the production of effective work. The building up of one by the pulling down of another is an old and well-known method of procedure practiced by the ancients not alone in art. Whether the building-up process can be farther advanced by the exaggeration or distortion of the main objects or colors is quite another question. Heretofore we have only negatively slurred actual nature by omission and suggestion. That justifiable to positively transgress natural limitations of drawing, proportion, or color is doubted. It has been done by the most ignorant, the idiosyncrasies of the greatest geniuses reducing principles to any but the dunces. The Syrians exaggerated the natural proportions. The Persians in their mold; and in other countries the appearance

unnatural smallness so as not to detract from the heroes. Holbein, Dürer, and Raphael, in their religious pictures, often knowingly sacrificed truth, and at times even probability, for a similar reason; while Michael Angelo and Blake, still bolder, did not hesitate to throw their figures out of drawing for the purpose of producing greater effects of power and motion. This is permissible in men of their stamp, like many other transgressions; but it is scarcely justifiable, and in ordinary talent would be intolerable. It may safely be set down as a vice which genius compensates for by excelling virtues. Art should not unnecessarily offend nature any more than morality or history; moreover, positive distortion of forms is not pleasing to the eye, nor is it conducive to the quick recognition of what they are or what they mean. It may be true that "the artist can only represent what he thinks by skillful modifications of what he may have seen;" but this modification may be made by an *apparent* change without a real alteration. Thus, as we have instanced in negative exaggeration, the suppression or semi-suppression of many objects for the benefit of one greatly enhances the importance of that one. Its appearance may be preternatural, when in reality it has undergone no positive change.

nature, yet possesses an accented  
alone and is not dimmed  
near it. This would  
set is bounded by the  
that of form; both  
ably.

Forms are used for the purpose of conveying ideas; and the simpler and truer (as we know the truth) they are, the easier will they be comprehended, no matter how great the idea. The grandest revelation ever brought to the human mind came in the simple form and language of the Gospels, and it were well if all art and all life would emulate that simplicity.

We should conclude, then, that the aim of painting is to convey a beautiful pictorial idea; that the materials used in accomplishing it are the forms of nature as they appear to us; and that the combination of both in expression completes the work of art. This unity brings up to mind again the simile of the wheel. Neither the idea nor the hub, neither the forms nor the spokes, may stand alone. It is only by the concentration of force on the central feature in both cases that the perfect whole is made up.

## CHAPTER V.

### OF THE ARTIST'S INDIVIDUALITY.

IMPERSONALITY is the negative stamp of the many millions who live through life and never attain more than the mediocrity of achievement. The great masses of mankind, commonplace in thought and conventional in deed, move from the cradle to the grave and leave no record of their coming or their going. The world heeds them

“As the Seven Seas might heed a pebble cast.”

For though they fall in countless numbers, the great surface is ruffled but for a moment, and then all trace is obliterated. History is made by the acts of individuals. These few, like the many, are human in that they resemble humanity; but they are likewise individual in that they resemble none but themselves. The man of superior mental strength who rises above his fellows, who sees clearer, farther, truer, who originates and creates, is called a genius, and his expression is called his individual style. In a nation its men of genius, though they may be different in part, if united in general purpose establish what is known as a national style. This applied to the different branches of knowledge produces national

history, which is always distinct as compared with that of other nations.

The nationality of art, as has been suggested, lies not in the choice of native subjects, but in the peculiar manner of viewing, estimating, and judging all subjects, and in the further manner of treatment. We have no difficulty in distinguishing German art from French art, nor in noting the difference between the Spanish-Roman school and the Pre-Raphaelite school of England. The subjects chosen may be widely different, or they may be the same, they may be located in the past or in the present: yet we are not deceived. The Madonna of the Germans and Dutchmen is one thing, and that of the Italians and Spaniards quite another. The thought and treatment are radically different. Contrast the Crucifixions of such representative men as Mantegna, Holbein, Velasquez, and Rembrandt, and the distinction will become apparent at once. This will apply to the artist as well as to the nation; though in the former the choice of subject, as it varies from others of his class, may be taken as indicative of individual thought. It may be well, however, to note a difference between this individuality and that which has often been mistaken for it —eccentricity. Great men differ in their views, and not infrequently inferior men do likewise. There is an individuality of greatness, and an eccentricity of foolishness; and though great men are often eccentric, yet eccentric men are not necessarily great. We are not treating of the simply odd or the grotesque. A man who may be recognized by extravagance in

tricks of the pen or of the brush is very different from the man known by singleness of thought and expression.

In the artist, individuality is not necessarily a display of his power, but of his thought and feeling as well. Genius, plodding, not in the beaten path of others, but in a new field of action, discovers first some hidden beauty. Then looking about for a manner of conveying an idea of it to the world, the discoverer finds the conventional manner of expression inadequate, and he originates a style of his own. Thus, when presented to the world, there is a new idea, a new subject, a new expression; and in each of these the peculiar power or passion of the artist is displayed. At first they startle us. New things usually do, for we do not fully comprehend them. It is the fate of greatness to be misunderstood, and we generally succeed in misunderstanding and abusing an innovation upon our conventional ideas until long after the innovator has passed away. Then after years of familiarity, when we have grown more appreciative of the work, we change our opinion of the man, call him a neglected genius, and place him among the nation's immortals. The history of the world is a confirmation of this, beginning with Homer begging his bread in the cities that afterward quarreled for the honor of his birthplace, and shown in this present century in our estimates of Millet and Corot, who were at first despised and are now glorified to extravagance.

The variance in men is but a difference in the ca-

pacity to think and feel. The quality and quantity of thought in the person shapes the action of the individual. The leaders of mankind are marked by mental strength, and their power to do is their incentive to dare. The might of the eagle urges him upward beyond the uttermost limits of the feathered tribe, and the power of genius drives the poet and painter into unknown realms, and into rarer atmospheres than common life may breathe. Again, these leaders of men differ widely from one another. Art to Phidias was a matter of form; to Titian, a matter of color; to Corot, a matter of feeling. How widely varying they are! Yet who shall say that each is not a genius? and who shall deny the unapproachable individuality of each? It is in the nature of genius to be peculiarly itself, and to follow a separate vein of thought and action. If Turner, Corot, and Rousseau could be brought together and placed before one scene in nature and induced (each by himself) to paint what they saw before them, it cannot be doubted that all three of the canvases would be true representations of the scene; but they would not be alike. Each would be treated from the peculiar point of view of its painter. Thus in one we can imagine an emphasis of sky, in another an emphasis of light, and in the third light and shade, mass and body of trees; yet they would all be pleasing, through the difference of thought in the men. To Michael Angelo a woman's face was nothing if not thoughtful; to Raphael, nothing if not beautiful; to Correggio, nothing if not animate with life. Each saw truly,

yet peculiarly and singularly. And the record of variations includes all art and all life. Homer conceived existence heroically ; Dante, ecclesiastically ; Milton, religiously and supernaturally. Byron, again, saw its darker side; Shelley, its intellectually-beautiful side; and Scott, its more romantic side. To take up and read their works is simply seeing the world as they saw it. A shift from the one to the other is like the revolution of a kaleidoscope, a complete change of view. And for this we cannot be too thankful, since it is but the diversity of genius, the difference in thought, that makes painting and literature enjoyable. If these great minds had all run in the same channel, as we are given to understand great minds do, and if they had all followed, not the promptings of their own consciousness, but that *sine qua non* of excellence called "truth to nature," imagine the monotony of staring at the same page and canvas! All would then be alike, and all would be similar to what we ourselves might see in nature. What would be the necessity, then, of the poem and the painting? But the human mind is chainless, boundless, free; Prometheus-like it peoples the world with countless conceptions. The monotony is broken, the mechanism of convention vanishes, and we look forth to see a panorama of life passing before us. We recognize the scenes as natural, but a kind of nature we have never seen before. In other words, we are brought to know the vision of genius. The new sight pleases us, the new thoughts are our admiration, and the

new expression excites our wonder. And, after all, what is it in the poem or the picture that we admire if it be not the man and his thought—the very individuality that marks him apart from mankind? It is the master shining through his work that pleases us, and the impress of his genius that we feel.\*

Individuality is seen not alone in the thought, but in the subject chosen to convey that thought; and here, again, appears variety. Ariosto, Molière, Byron, Tennyson, all treat of love; but mark the difference in their lovers. Contrast the Fausts of Marlowe and Goethe, or the Mephistopheles of either with the Satan of Milton. The main ideas are not dissimilar, but the forms in which they appear most certainly are. Each in his peculiar way chooses the subject best fitted to embody his thought; and in the nature of genius, which, even at its height, is ever limited within itself, it could not possibly be otherwise. Men act as they must, not as they would; and though one may be greater than another, yet they occupy separate spheres of action, and each in his place is worthy of admiration. With equal ease do we recognize the different subjects of the painters. Neither the thought nor its expression is necessary to tell at a glance the figures of Fra Angelico. Whatever may be his ideas, we know what forms he will choose for their portrayal. So, again, from a distance we recognize the healthy-looking peo-

---

\* "Of every work of art we may truly say that its chief value consists in the personal character of its author."—Véron, *Aësthetics*.

ple of Rubens and the muscular-limbed, serious-faced characters of Michael Angelo. It is quite impossible to make a mistake about the classical line of David, or not to know the peasant-figures of Bréton and Millet. They are as apparent as the Endymions of Keats or the toiling poor of Robert Burns. The drift of thought in Keats can find no expression save in classic form, and the poetry of peasant-life remains unsung if the singer be not born to the peasantry. These peculiar signs as displayed in subjects chosen, by which we learn the bent of individual minds, are what may be called ear-marks of genius; and yet they are not vices, as many suppose. While the skill of even the greatest is limited, success would better be attained in one thing than failure experienced in many. The marks of genius become vices only in the counterfeitors. We see not alone the perceptions and style of an artist copied by his school of followers, but his subjects likewise. Thus Michael Angelo appears in the Carracci; Raphael, in Guido and Carlo Dolci; and Millet, in the hundreds of young students at Paris who are now painting the blue-frocked and wooden-shoed peasantry of France. Originality, even though eccentric and mannered, is admirable; but imitation is ever contemptible. And why is this latter true if not because the man—the individual—is absent?

But possibly the individuality of genius never makes itself quite so manifest as in its expression. Its note is always clear, distinct, decisive. The same thought may have occurred to many men, yet be of different value owing to its treatment. Many in history have

meditated upon death from a suicide's standpoint—Phædra, Pelopia, Cleopatra, Cato, Hamlet. They all may have had similar reflections regarding it, but their interpreters have translated them differently. If Petrarch treats of love, we recognize the worshiper to whom love is a mediæval creed; if Shelley treats of it, we are made to know the hymnist of ideal devotion; if Byron, we have all the fire of a purely human passion. Again, the individual is identified by the smaller details of his treatment, much as is a bird by its note. If one should take up a book of poetical quotations and read at random, it would be an easy task to name many of the different authors from their rhythm and choice of words. The geniuses of the world become known to us in the same way as acquaintances on the street. There is something singular about their appearance that separates them from their kind, and that singular something may be called individuality. We like some of our associates better than others because they have qualities different from the majority; and we like genius for a similar reason. As we recognize Macaulay, Taine, or Carlyle by sound, so we may tell Holbein, Rembrandt, or Delacroix by sight. The veriest rustic in art may learn to know the masters as he does the letters of the alphabet—by their peculiar and distinct appearance. Take the imaginary case we have cited of Turner, Corot, and Rousseau painting the same landscape. Should we have any difficulty in distinguishing one from the other by the various treatments of sky, light, and trees? Turner would very likely paint everything in the view, even

to rock-cleavage and leaf-vein. Corot and Rousseau would do nothing of the kind, but rather concentrate strength on light and shade and color. Look, again, at the Crucifixions, and the difference in line, mass, and brushwork will mark apart the robust, muscular Christ of Rubens from the delicate and refined Christ of Van Dyke, the physically weak and spiritual Christ of Fra Angelico from the purely human and anatomical Christ of Bonnat. Color is but another element by which we may recognize the individual. It is only a means of expression, like line and mass, yet it speaks volumes regarding the artist. It unfolds his tastes, his views, his beliefs, his aspirations. And here, as in ideas, subject, and form, we are able to distinguish the artists as we do the flowers of the field. All things of earth are modeled after their kind; yet unto some are given such emphasis of qualities that instantly we recognize their superiority over their companions. Thus it is with man; and they who excel in mental strength, though human, are yet individual; and though men, they are yet superior men.

A picture is at best but an autobiographical statement: and it is the man and not the facts that may awaken our admiration; for, unless we feel his presence and know his genius, the picture is nothing but a collection of incidents. It is not the work, but the worker; not the mold, but the molder; not the paint, but the painter. Imitation, and even simple truth to nature, is an elimination of the individual that deadens the whole, for the soul of creation is the contribution

of the creator and is not found in simple forms. The perceptions, actions, emotions of the man are as patent on the face of the canvas as in the poem. Both are revelations of the inner life. To read books is to become personally acquainted with the authors of them, to enter into their choice thoughts, to discuss and talk with them, to admire them. We sit at the table with Plato, Confucius, and Zoroaster; we rise and walk with Rabelais and Cervantes; we commune at night with Ossian, Emerson, or Chateaubriand. Each in turn reveals himself in his writings. Not alone the nation, but the individual, writes his autobiography in three books: the book of his deeds, the book of his words, and the book of his art. The first, as Mr. Ruskin, whose figure we are using, tells us, may be compelled and therefore not indicative of true character; the second may be false and again not representative; but the third proceeds from the impulses of the full heart. Art alone tells truly the character and genius of its producer. If all the life of Michael Angelo known to history were swept away, we yet could judge his nature from his works. The solitary figures of the Sibyls and the Prophets with their sad eyes and heavy brows betray the lone and gloomy master, and in the Moses we see the passion and fury of a Titan suppressed within an exterior of stone. Consciously or unconsciously, people paint themselves upon the canvas. They mold the world upon their own thoughts, and that which they have known, suffered, and endured speaks out until the picture becomes but a record of the artist's life. The

elegant Leonardo, accustomed to the most courtly surroundings, appears in the noble faces and majestic figures of the Last Supper; Van Dyke, the polished gentleman and courtier, shows his refinement and delicacy in the faces of his portraits; and in the figure of The Sower toiling on among innumerable difficulties we see the prototype of Millet—even Millet the peasant, battling heroically against the stubborn world.

This is applicable not to figure-pictures alone, but may be traced through landscapes, although in a slighter, more uncertain manner. “He best can paint them who shall feel them most.” Courbet’s stormy skies betray the turbulent revolutionist; the light of Father Corot is symbolic of the soft radiance of the man’s life; and the sun of Turner in solitary splendor was but the echo of a mind “unstooping to the baser crowd”—a life and an art both unapproachable.

“One noble stroke with a whole life may glow,  
Or sanctify the canvas till it shine,  
With beauty far surpassing all below,

• • • • •  
Transfused, transfigured, and the line  
Of Poesy which peoples but the air  
With thoughts and beings of the mind reflected  
Can do no more.”

A word regarding the reverse of individual expression in both art and literature, or that which goes by the pseudo-metaphysical title of “objective treatment.” Aside from its being entirely out of keeping with the spirit of the age, and the impossibility of

ever attaining more than approximate objectivity, it is false to every principle of art as we now understand it. Poetry is not a dictionary of facts, nor painting a physiological, geological, or botanical encyclopedia. The wood in the forest and the marble in the quarry are facts; but something more than these is required to make the cathedral and the palace. The genius of man must enter and remain in the work. The obliteration of human thought and feeling leaves but mechanical exactness: and this is what the believers in objective treatment admire and seek after. They are more familiarly known under the name of "realists;" and a general definition of them would be, those who believe in the total absence of the author and painter except as a person who puts the facts of nature together as he finds them, and presents them to the public in that shape. In literature the lesser writers imagine they are objective when not referring to themselves in the first person singular; while the intermediate poets and romancers become so by going the rounds of the people note-book in hand, after the manner of Daudet, and putting down actual sayings and conversations as they hear them, to be afterward transcribed in book-form. This may be truth to nature, but it is not literature; and the literal imitation of facts may be photography, but it is not painting. Art is a matter of ideas; and those who possess them cannot escape the bias of their own minds, and must express them. So soon as they are set forth, more or less of the artist's individuality is displayed and forms a part of the work. It cannot be left out of considera-

tion; and to separate the poet from the poem, the painter from the painting, is an impossibility unless the man convert himself into a lens and become a photographer of the good, bad, and indifferent alike. All that is Homeric is Homer; all that is Miltonic is Milton; all that is Shakspearean is Shakspeare. Thrust aside the individuals, and the rest is but "leather and prunello." The man lives in his art as the soul lives in the body. Strike out the one, and the other is but worthless clay.

Painting, as we have attempted to maintain, is but a symbolic language for the eye, and is analogous to poetry, a language for the ear. "Great art is produced by men who feel acutely and nobly, and it is in some sort an expression of this personal feeling." The author of *Modern Painters* never wrote a truer sentence; although as a believer in "truth to nature" it is a large concession for him to make. Nothing great was ever created that did not emanate directly from a great mind. Words, facts, forms, what better are they in themselves than the wedges that make up the cuneiform ideograms? Utterly vapid and meaningless rubbish! Yet when touched and put into place by the master-hand there is scarcely anything too lofty to be expressed by them. What, then, do we value—the forms that express or the idea which is expressed? And what is the idea but the expression of this "personal feeling"? Given the thought, we shall have no difficulty in recognizing the thinker. The more we see of him and of his ideas, the better we may like them; but sweep them

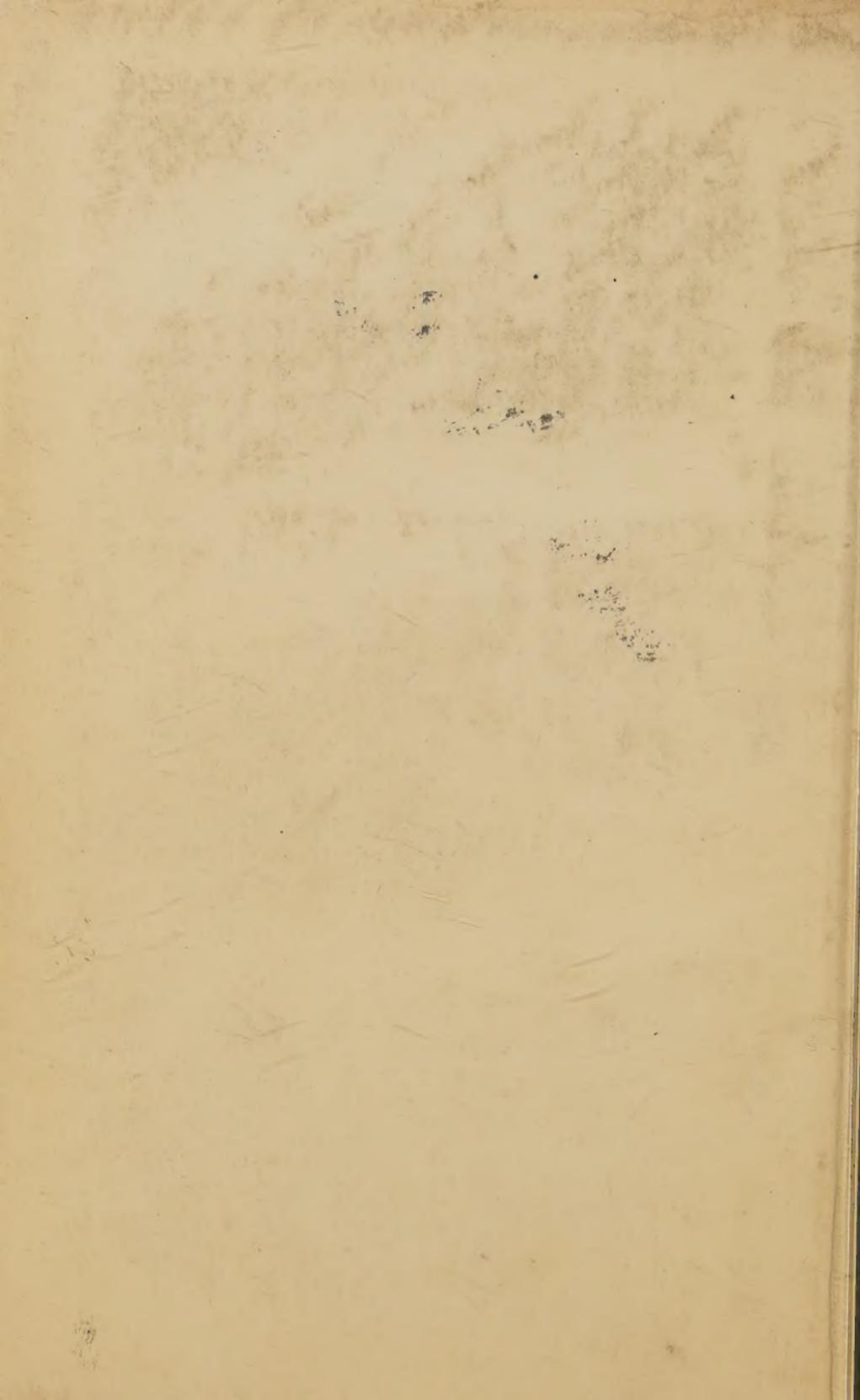
both off and present us with pure imitation of reality, and immediately our interest ceases.

Art is man's language for the expression of the beautiful, and nature furnishes him the words of that language. The former is dependent upon the latter; but nature is passive, while the active principle—the sublime thought and the glowing fancy—is the contribution of the artist. In the conception of genius lies the chief strength of art. It is this that we seek, this that pleases us; and the longer we live and the higher we rise in the scale of creation, the better we shall appreciate the matchless beauty of the mind—that indefinable something which connects us with a spiritual world.

THE END.







**DISCARDED**

THIS IS NO LONGER PROPERTY OF THE SEATTLE PUBLIC LIBRARY

